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THE BOYHOOD
OF ALGERNON CHARLES
SWINBURNE



ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. ÆTAT 25.

THE BOYHOOD OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

BY HIS COUSIN

MRS. DISNEY LEITH

WITH EXTRACTS
FROM SOME OF HIS
PRIVATE LETTERS

46168

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1917

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1917

IN DEAR MEMORY OF
HER
WHO LEFT ME THIS WORK TO DO
I DEDICATE
WHATEVER IN IT IS WORTHY

PREFATORY NOTE

THE following "Recollections" (with the verses "A Year's Mind") appeared originally in the April number of the *Contemporary Review* in 1910. They have been revised and considerably expanded since they first appeared, and in their amended condition are now at length given to the world.

A YEAR'S MIND

April, that "made" and took him, comes once more
To that fair Undercliff he loved so well
And truly, cliff and crag and rock-strewn shore,
And to the garden-graves of one sweet dell
Where, deaf to love that clung and prayed and wept,
(While this fair world its Easter sabbath kept)
Twelve moons ago, he laid him down and slept.

Around in grassy nook and tangled brake
Primrose and violet begin to peer,
And celandine's wide star-bright eyes awake ;
And all the woods are vocal—far and near
The air is filled with Life's reviving hum ;
The time of many singing-birds is come ;
Only our Singer's lips and lyre are dumb.

The fame he craved not, courted not, abides,
The songs he sang shall hardly pass away
While Culver's stark white steep withstands the tides,
Or little children in the Landslip play
As once he played there : eve and crystal dawn
Seem goodlier now on shore and sea and lawn
That hence such music and such might were drawn.

But fairer than the light on field and foam,
And brighter than his fame which fills the land,
His love of kindred and his love of home
And all things true and beautiful, shall stand
Immortal ; and the mists of pain and gloom
Approach not, nor shall mar the fadeless bloom
Of Love that hallows and that guards his tomb.

M. C. J. L.

April 10th, 1909.



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THE BOYHOOD OF
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE



THE BOYHOOD OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I HAVE undertaken to give some notes of my early recollections of my cousin, Algernon Charles Swinburne.

When one's recollections go back to sitting on the nursery floor together playing with bricks, it is rather difficult to know exactly where one ought to start for biographical purposes. Perhaps I had better begin by saying just what our relationship was, as it is of a rather complicated nature. Our mothers (daughters of the third Earl of Ashburnham) were sisters; our fathers, first cousins—more alike in characters and tastes, more linked in closest friendship, than many brothers. Added to this, our paternal grandmothers—two sisters and co-heiresses—were first cousins to our common maternal grandmother; thus our fathers were also second cousins to their wives before marriage. Whether this complexity of relationship had anything to do with the strong

sisterly tie always existing between my Swinburne cousins and myself I cannot say; but I here give it for what it is worth, adding that from my earliest recollections "Cousin Hadji" (the childish name which clung to him through life is so widely known that there is no harm in my using it) was to me as an elder brother, a loved and sympathetic playmate, as in later years a loyal and affectionate friend.*

One observation I should like to make at the start. I know it is difficult for the world to understand such friendships as ours without weaving into them a thread of romance, existing only in its imagination. I know that such has been the case even with us, and that a fiction has somehow been built up, and has even got into print. Therefore, especially, I am anxious to say once and for all that there was never, in all our

* There was a false impression regarding the existence of a French ancestress in the Swinburne family which Algernon himself shared, and he seems to have been unable to divest himself of the idea. Its explanation and refutation have been left in writing by his youngest sister, and I may as well give their substance. The father of their great-grandmother (her name was Christiana Dillon), having married *en secondes nocces* a Miss Dicconson who was brought up in France, lived there almost entirely, and his children by his second wife were brought up there by their mother after his death. Miss Swinburne thinks that Algernon may have heard his Swinburne grandfather talk of his French kinsfolk, but there was no blood relationship—as doubtless Algernon, with his strong French proclivities and sympathies, would fain have believed.

years of friendship, an ounce of sentiment between us. Any idea of the kind would have been an insult to our brother-and-sister footing, and would have destroyed at once and for ever our unfettered intercourse and happy intimacy, which Algernon himself has so beautifully described in the "Dedication" to me of his tragedy of "Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards":

" Scarce less in love than brother and sister born,
Even all save brother and sister sealed at birth."

My first connected recollection of the nursery days to which I have alluded was seeing Algernon riding on a very small Shetland pony, which he named "York," led by a servant. As our respective families lived in the same small island—at times only five miles apart, when I was at my grandparents' house—The Orchard—at Niton, the interchange of visits was frequent, and we intermingled as one large family. To me, who had no brother or sister actually of my own, it was great joy to be launched into a group of more or less contemporary children. I can distinctly remember often, in those very early days, seeing Algernon and his eldest sister walking on ahead of the rest over the rough grass of the Bonchurch Down—he with that springy, dancing step which he never entirely lost; while I, a much younger and very unsteady-footed child, stumbled along after

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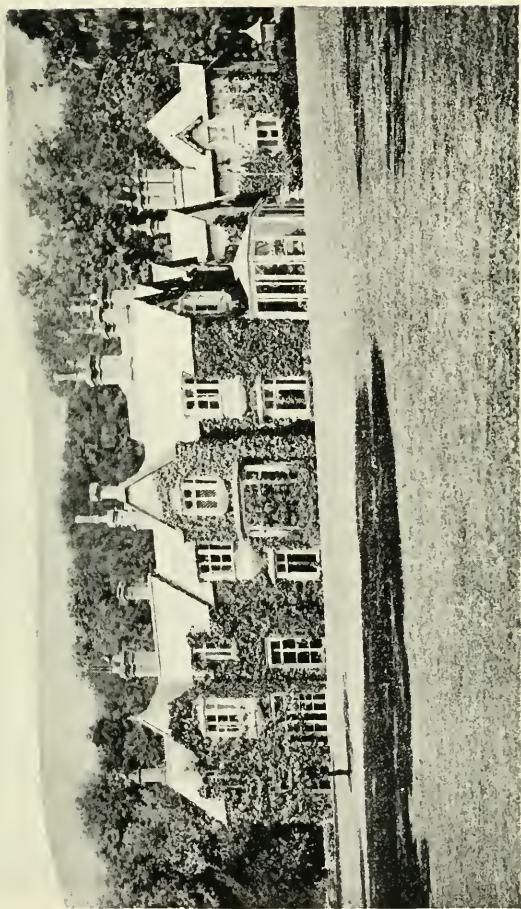
them among the younger fry, with frequent falls, and a feeling of pursuing the unattainable. In the recollection of those walks and games "up the hill," it seems strange that I should have been the only one of that band of playmates to follow and walk at his dear and honoured head on his last journey up that steep Bonchurch shute to his resting-place in the churchyard.

When we were at East Dene on Sundays the children all said their Catechism together; and my aunt—whose teaching was exactly the same as my mother's—would let me join her little class. I can remember even then how beautiful Algernon's reading was when it was his turn to read or repeat a passage or text.

Nursery days glided on into schoolroom days without much definite demarcation. I did not as a rule join in my cousins' lessons, though I was often in the schoolroom while lessons were going on; and, of course, at play and meal-times. I do not remember anything of special note, except the fact that Algernon was always privileged to have a book at meal-times. I do not know when the habit began. But there was always the book, at tea-time especially; it was a fat Shakespeare; as far as I remember.* One little schoolroom

* Lord Redesdale, in his "Memories," alludes to this favourite book being taken by Algernon to school.

1894



EAST DENE, BONCHURCH. THE POET'S EARLY HOME.

incident I do recall ; a trifle, but characteristic. On some afternoons the children's amusement was painting ; we used to have little scraps cut from illustrated papers, to paint in water-colour. The governess would read aloud to us little stories of the " Penny Reward Book " series, which were issued in those days for children. There was a discussion one day as to which story should be read, one being doubtful, because the governess said there was something we should not like, about drowning puppies. " Oh," said Algernon, vehemently, " if it's anything about cruelty to animals, *don't* read it ! " speaking exactly in the tone he used in later years about any book he disliked. He was devoted to and tender-hearted about animals ; horses and cats, perhaps (witness his splendid short poem " To a Cat "), were the favourites. Of his fearless riding I may speak later.

When he was going as a pupil to Brooke Rectory (I.W.) to be prepared for Eton he spent a few days with my parents, our home—Northcourt—being nearer to Brooke than his. We had a great time together, and used to run up and down a long passage, nominally " playing at horses," but usually, if I remember, acting " people " as well. We were all fond of this pastime,^{sp} and his " people " were often of a very comic description. When he was at Brooke my

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mother and I went to see him after he was established there. He carried me off up to his own room, which he exhibited with great glee, saying : “ *Everything* in this room is mine.” I immediately pointed to a very large family portrait of a lady and child, saying : “ Is *that* yours ? ” “ No—but everything else is.”

The first serial stories of Charles Dickens were coming out during his schooldays ; and he was the only one of the younger generation privileged to read them—of course, they were beyond the rest of us. But we heard a good deal about them from him, and we used to be shown “ Phiz’s ” wonderful illustrations as they came out. Algernon’s admiration for the stories, begun at this time, continued through life.

I remember one occasion on which he made us all into a kind of *tableau* out of “ Dombey and Son ”—himself taking the part of Mrs. Skewton in her Bath chair ! There was a consultation as to who should be Carker—whoever could show the best set of teeth. I was eager to qualify for a part, and put on a tremendous grin, which I was told would do ! *Apropos* of his love of Dickens, he says in a letter to me so late as 1901 : “ I am writing a short essay on Dickens to be prefixed to a new edition of ‘ Oliver Twist ’ ; W—— is writing (or about to write) a similar

introduction to 'A Tale of Two Cities.' I thought you might like to hear of this undertaking, tho' I fancy—and fear—D. was never such a household god with you and yours at Northcourt as with me and mine at East Dene in our early days. Never shall I forget the monthly appearance of the first of his books I was old enough to take in—'Bleak House,' which ran through two of my years at Eton and was apt to interfere with my work rather seriously on the first of each month. Don't I remember how I used to scuttle up to town to Ingaltan's after morning school, to get it before school and prayer-time."

With all his early love of books and verse, be it remembered, ⁴⁸he never posed as a child-poet. A great sense of rhythm and facility for verse of a sort he certainly must always have possessed, but anything of the kind was invariably comic, and generally spouted on the impulse of the moment. ⁴⁹He used before and during his school-days to write dramas of a bloodcurdling and highly tragic nature, in which a frequent stage direction—"stabs the king"—passed into a family joke. I mention this as a false idea appears to have somehow got abroad that there were early efforts of his which attracted attention. The figment which—through an accidental coincidence of initial—got into print as to certain

verses in *Fraser's Magazine*, is hardly worth recalling except to show how much may be built up on a false foundation. And even had it been the case that he had attempted serious verse at an early age, his parents were the last persons in the world to seek publicity for such efforts. Children in those days did not rush into print with the facility which juvenile magazines and "children's salons" offer in these later times.

We were both staying in London one spring at our maternal grandmother's during a part of the Eton holidays, at which time he was taken by her to visit the poet Samuel Rogers, then a very old man. Years afterwards, when we were reading Tennyson's "Maud" together, he told me how he had read it first at that time, and how special parts had impressed him. There is a reference to the sun as a "dull red ball," which came home to him at sight of a London sun. I did not know anything about "Maud" at that early date, but I recollect the "dull red ball" to this day.

I had my first impressions of Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome" from him. I was always fond of Roman history as a child. And the spirited, sounding periods of the "Lays" repeated to me by Algernon—often when we were riding together—took a lively hold of my imagination. Very

great was my pride and delight when he presented me with a copy of the first edition. I have the dear little brown book now, with my name written and the date 1854.

Some of our happiest days together were spent at his grandfather's (my great uncle) Sir John Swinburne's house at Capheaton. The family always spent the late summer and autumn with him, and I often enjoyed a short visit on my parents' journey South from our Scotch home. Sir John Swinburne, who lived to a patriarchal age, was the most genial of men, and loved to fill his house with grandchildren or nieces. A large cousinhood gathered there in those bright autumn days, where everything seemed to combine for the delight of youth—a lake to row or sail on, lovely gardens and woods to roam or play in, and, above all, abundance of ponies to ride. In these delights we revelled, and many a masterpiece of the Victorian poets was recited—as only Algernon could recite—during a spirited canter or a leisurely saunter on horseback through those beautiful Northumbrian roads or fields.

I have not said anything about his personal appearance. There have been varying descriptions of him given to the world—some of which can be only characterized as grotesque. Rossetti's early portraits give perhaps the best idea

of him in youth, and some photographs taken at Pau; but of all portraits in later life the palm must be given to a large full-face photo taken at Putney, which is as speaking a likeness as I have ever seen of any man. Lord Redesdale's description of him when he went to Eton first is pleasing and characteristic. He speaks of him as "strangely tiny"—this may have been the case, though to a younger child it would not be so apparent. We were not a tall family, and he seemed always to keep his proportionate place in our midst.

I should say the eyes were the most striking feature in his face. Always expressive, they had, when he was at all eager or excited, a peculiar brightness—as if his soul actually leapt up to them and went out to you. I can describe it no otherwise. A peculiarity was the length and thickness of the eyelashes, which he used to complain would get entangled in a high wind.

The habit of drawing down and shaking his arms and hands when animated began in very early days—one who could remember said it originated in his watching a spinning toy when quite an infant. Certainly it clung to him for life in a greater or less degree. He was wiry and very agile in figure and quite in proportion, though the height of his splendid forehead, and

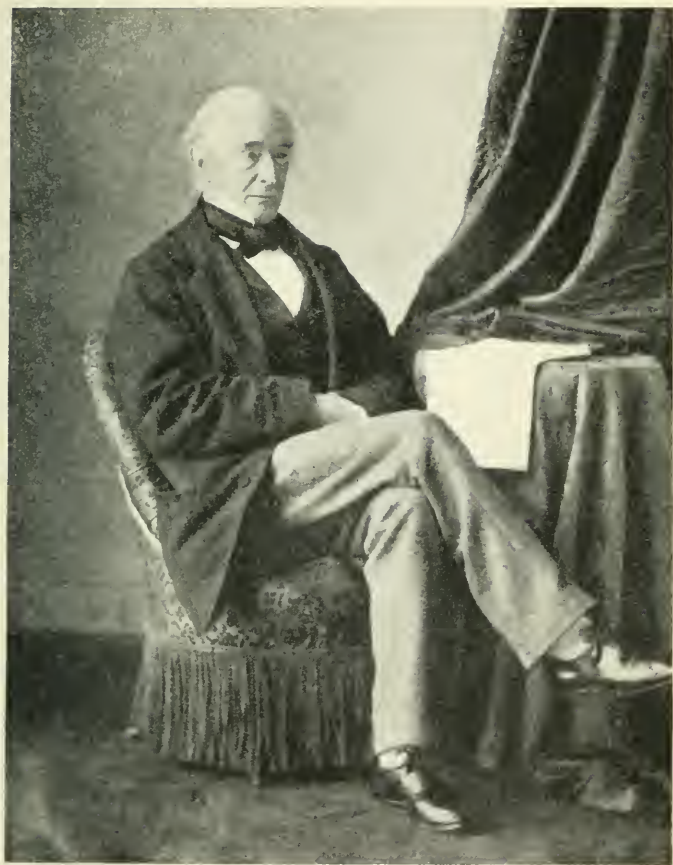
in youth the profusion of hair, gave his head perhaps the appearance of being large for his small stature.

It is here that I should allude to an event—I cannot call it a reminiscence, for I do not remember hearing of it at the time, or, indeed, for long after—that has a curious bearing upon the trend of Algernon's mind at the period. Years after he described it to me by letter, and I think it is only fair to give it as far as possible in his own words, prefacing that Culver Cliff—the great white chalk promontory to the south-east of the Isle of Wight—is about as unassailable to ordinary mortals as any of our island ramparts.

“If you really want to know about my doing Culver, I don't mind telling you.” Then he speaks of himself for a few sentences jestingly and in the third person, saying that my never having heard of the occurrence showed that he was not a boy to brag or swagger.

“But he didn't care to talk about the great disappointment of his life. After leaving Eton near the end of his seventeenth year he wanted to go into the army. Didn't he, poor chap! The Balaklava Charge eclipsed all other visions. To be prepared for such a chance as that, instead of being prepared for Oxford, was the one dream of his life. I am sure you won't deride it because he was but a little, slightly built chap. My

mother," he continues, "was not altogether against it, and told me that they must take three days to think the matter over. I never said a word even to A." (his eldest sister) "about it, but at the end of the three days they told me it could not be; my father had made up his mind. I dare say now he was quite right. But then I couldn't and didn't say anything. It was about the middle of the Christmas holidays, and I went out for a good hard tramp by the sea till I found myself at the foot of Culver Cliff; and then all at once it came upon me that it was all very well to fancy or dream of 'deadly danger' and forlorn hopes and cavalry charges, when I had never run any greater risk than a football 'rooge'; but that here was a chance of testing my nerve in face of death which could not be surpassed. So I climbed a rock under the highest point, and stripped, and climbed down again, and just took a souse into the sea to steady and strengthen my nerve, which I knew the sharp chill would, and climbed up again, thinking how easy it would be to climb the whole face of the cliff naked—or at least how much more sure one would feel of being able to do it—if one did not mind mere scratches or bruises; but to that prehistoric sort of proceeding there were obviously other objections than the atmosphere of midwinter. So I dressed and went straight at it. It wasn't so hard as it looked, most of the way, for a light weight with a sure foot and a good steady head; but as I got near the top I remember thinking I should not like to have to climb down again. In a minute or two more I found that I must, as the top part (or top story) of the precipice came



REAR-ADMIRAL C. H. SWINBURNE.

jutting out aslant above me for some feet. Even a real sea-gull* could not have worked its way up without using or spreading its wings. So of course I felt I must not stop to think for one second, and began climbing down, hand under hand, as fast and as steadily as I could, till I reached the bottom, and (equally of course) began to look out for another possible point of ascent at the same height. As I began again I must own I felt like setting my teeth and swearing I would not come down again alive—if I did return to the foot of the cliff again it should be in a fragmentary condition, and there would not be much of me to pick up. I was most of the way up again when I heard a sudden sound as of loud music, reminding me instantly of ‘the anthem’ from the Eton Chapel organ, a little below me to the left. I knew it would be almost certain death to look down, and next minute there was no need : I glanced aside, and saw the opening of a great hollow in the upper cliff, out of which came swarming a perfect flock of ‘the others,’† who evidently had never seen a wingless brother so near the family quarters before. They rose all about me in a heaving cloud—at least, I really don’t think the phrase exaggerates the density of their ‘congregated wings’—and then scattered. It did flash across me for a minute how nasty it would be if they flew at me and went for my indefensible eyes ; but, of course, they never thought of anything so unnatural and unfraternal. I was a little higher, quite near the top or well within hail of it, when I thought how

* One of his home nicknames.

† Sea-gulls, of which he loved to speak as being his brothers and sisters—the “others,” in home parlance.

queer it would be if my very scanty foothold gave way ; and at that very minute it did (I assure you on my word of honour that this is the exact truth, strange as it sounds and is), and I swung in the air by my hands from a ledge on the cliff which just gave room for the fingers to cling and hold on. There was a projection of rock to the left at which I flung out my feet sideways and just reached it ; this enabled me to get breath and crawl at full speed (so to say) up the remaining bit of cliff. At the top I had not strength enough left to turn or stir ; I lay on my right side helpless, and just had time to think what a sell (and what an inevitable one) it would be if I were to roll back over the edge after all, when I became unconscious—as suddenly and utterly and painlessly as I did many years afterwards when I was ‘ picked up at sea ’ by a Norman fishing boat upwards of three miles (they told me) off the coast of Etretât, and could just clutch hold of the oar they held out ; ‘ but that is not in this story ’—which I only hope is not too long for the reader. On returning to conscious life I found a sheep’s nose just over mine, and the poor good fellow-creature’s eyes gazing into my face with a look of such kindly pity and sympathy as well as surprise and perplexity that I never ought to have eaten a mutton-chop again. I couldn’t help bursting into such a shout of laughter (I did the same thing when I ‘ came to ’ in the boat . . .) that the sheep scuttled off like a boy out of bounds at sight of one of the masters. I don’t think I was ever so hungry as when I got back to East Dene, and found that everybody was out looking for me (or so the servants said).

After eating and sleeping I had an interview with my mother, of which I should not care to write except to the daughter of yours. Of course she wanted to know why I had done such a thing, and when I told her she laughed a short sweet laugh most satisfactory to the young ear, and said, 'Nobody ever thought you were a coward, my boy.' I said that was all very well: but how could I tell till I tried? 'But you won't do it again?' she said. I replied, of course not—where could be the fun? I knew now that it could be done, and I only wanted to do it because nobody thought it could."

How little those who rejoiced and gave thanks for the safety of a beloved son and brother could have foreseen the loss that might in one moment have accrued to the world and the century, or the halo of association that will surround Culver Cliff for ever, at least as long as Swinburne's name is remembered!

I have alluded to his fondness for riding, an amusement which we often shared. I am bound to confess that if a fearless he was also a reckless rider, and more than once I remember his start ending in disaster. On one occasion we were riding together on the downs, and he got a bad fall—probably from carelessness with a clumsy pony. The old groom, who was always my attendant in those days, feared his spine was injured, and galloped away to procure a conveyance

to bring him home, leaving us two on the down. After a few minutes Algernon picked himself up, and found he could walk, so we started to walk home, leading our ponies, and arrived, much to the relief of our relatives (who had been greatly concerned), before any conveyance appeared. Another time—but this was earlier—he was thrown against a stone wall by a refractory mount and cut his head. We were to be taken that night to hear a lecture on “Macbeth,” and I remember Algernon going with his head bound up. These were only two of many mishaps: one later took place while he was at Oxford, when, needless to say, I was not in his company. I believe it was a pretty bad spill.

But, nevertheless, for years—all my unmarried life—we rode together constantly and without mischance. We would gallop along wildly, much absorbed in our conversation, but no harm ever came to me, nor did he ever play dangerous tricks with his companion.

Among the many visits which he paid to us, two stand out particularly in my remembrance: one in Scotland (during his college vacation) and one in the winter of 1863-4. During the former, I remember his trying to cross a stream by a fallen tree lying across it; he went a little way on all fours and then fell plump into the burn. It had

a stony bottom, and he must have come down pretty hard ; but except for the sharp pain at first no bad effect followed.

The latter visit in the Isle of Wight was, I think, the longest time he ever stayed with us continuously, and was a delightful as well as a memorable time. His own family was abroad, and he stayed, I think, from October to February. At that time he was engaged on "Atalanta in Calydon"—his first great play on the model of the Greek drama. It was begun when he came to us, but the first time I ever heard the opening chorus, "When the hounds of Spring are on Winter's traces," was on horseback, and I know to this day the exact strip of road, between Newport and Shorwell, where he repeated it to me. In our library, often alone with my mother and myself, much of the work was written out, and the table would be strewn with the big sheets of manuscript. But I think none of those who have since read and delighted in "Atalanta" would believe the amount of "nonsense" which was going on side by side with the famous work. We were both devoted to the game of *bouts rimés*, and used to set each other pages and pages of *bouts*, always of a comic nature ; and then he used to read them aloud when completed, in the evening. We were also fond of what are now called

— “Limericks,” and he had a way of finding the most ridiculous and expressive rhymes to names of all sorts. I recollect one evening he said of a name casually mentioned, “I wonder if one could find a rhyme to Atkinson,” and then immediately spouted :

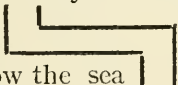
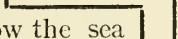
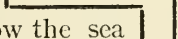
“A tree with all its catkins on
Was planted by Miss Atkinson !”

But his diversions were not wholly nonsensical, for at this time he wrote and gave to me, absolutely, for a boys’ story which I was writing, a beautiful little “Morality” play, called the “Pilgrimage of Pleasure.” The book in which it appeared, long out of print, but republished within the last few years, was called “The Children of the Chapel.” We had great amusement over the story, which I may almost call a joint production, he making suggestions and giving me endless references and information, the tale being historical. Another story which I was engaged upon at the time was more or less revised by him.* He also could spare time and attention to help me with some very rudimentary Greek studies I had begun, and selecting passages which we read together.

* This story was rewritten and published years after, under the title of “Trusty in Fight.” To the last Algernon would inscribe in the flyleaf of any book he gave me—they were many—the name of one of my boy-heroes, assuming as the donor that of one of his own. I mention this as an example of his extraordinary playfulness and condescension to “childish things.”

I think it was the following autumn which he spent in Cornwall. My parents and I were in Scotland, and I received constant letters from him.

Among a great deal that is comic and clever, but only intelligible to one who understood our jokes and "characters" under which we delighted to write, are some charming and graphic descriptions. Here is one under date of September 2nd (1864) :

" I could have wished for [your] company yesterday night when we took out horses, borrowed from a neighbouring farmer, and rode through the dusk and the dark to the adjacent city of Boscastle. This important and flourishing seaport does not exactly boast of a highway to the sea, but it has a path cut or worn in the slope of the down, along which we let our horses (being surefooted Cornish ones who know the nature of their sea and their down . . .) feel their way till we came out one after another on a narrow standing place of rocks, breaking sharply down to the sea on both sides. This ridge of rocks shuts in the harbour, and the sea having incautiously poured in through a strait between the ridge and the cliff opposite turns twice at right-angles upon itself and makes a sort of double harbour ; one parallel with the outer sea, blocked out by the rocks to which we had ridden ; the other running straight up the valley to the houses of the little town as thus :  and as there is no beach or shore  of any kind, you can imagine how the sea  swings to and fro between the cliffs, foams and swells, beats and

baffles itself against the steep faces of rock. I should guess it must be unique in England. Seen from above and on horseback it was very queer, dark grey swollen water, caught as it were in a trap, and heaving with rage against both sides at once, edged with long panting lines of incessant foam that swung and lapped along the deep steep cliffs without breaking, and had not room to roll at ease. My horse was much the pluckier, and made forward as if on a road ; would, I believe, have tried to mount the rough rock-hewn steps from this natural platform to a sort of beacon at the mouth of the inlet ; but seeing the difficulties of redescending (which was a delicate business as it was) I turned him round after a bit of ascent. It was not unexciting, especially by a grey and glimmering night without moon or star. Had it been on a smuggling expedition it would have been sweet indeed. Having ridden back towards the scattered lights of the town, and got on a high road again instead of a cliff path just above the sea, I tried my beast's pace at a gallop, having already tested the goodness of his head and sureness of his feet, in which he matched any possible Alpine mule. He went very well and we tore over the ground in the night at such a rate that we all but banged against late carts in the lanes, and *quite* electrified the stray population. I have bathed twice, but the sea is very treacherous and tiring ; no sand, hardly any beach even at low water in the narrow bays, sudden steep banks, shelving rocks, and sea pitching violently in the entrance of the bays ; so that where there are rocks to take breath at one can't make for them lest the sea should *slave* one's ribs in against the

reefs; and a sea that pitches from side to side without breakers or rollers, and has no resting places except on the high and dry rocks inland, takes it out of one in swimming much more than one thinks. We are twenty-five miles from the nearest railway, and *Clatt*" [our own Scotch village] "is as it were Babylon or Nineveh to *our* post town—Camelford, which is six miles inland. Nothing can be funnier than these villages except the downs and glens in which they are set. The sea-views are, of course, splendid beyond praise. On one headland (split now into two, divided by a steep isthmus of rock between two gulfs of sea, not wide enough for two to walk abreast across) is the double ruin, one half facing the other, of the old castle or palace of the kings of Cornwall. Opposite on a high down is the old church, black with rain and time and storm, black at least in the tower, and grey in the body. The outer half of the castle, on the headland beyond the isthmus is on the very edge (and partly over the edge and on the slant) of the cliff; and has indescribable views of the double bay, broken cliffs, and outer sea. Practically, the *total* want of beach at any time of tide is a great loss."

The same letter relates in an amusing manner how he and his companion were "lodged and boarded in the schoolhouse," where he once overheard a flogging going on in the schoolroom, to which his Etonian ears were specially sensitive—and sympathetic. Also he describes a local hunt in which he joined: "how after 100,000,000 false starts the scent was lost after all, if indeed it ever

existed. But we had some good gallops on our own hook, and one lark . . . which was that your cousin really lifted a gate off its hinges for a female to pass. Said female herself much of a lark, a neighbouring clergyman's wife, semi-Spanish, semi-Irish, awfully hospitable and good-natured, not to call vulgar, because *natural*; but such a comic, boisterous set of people as she was at the head of! Clergymen, agents, farmers, all much alike, and also very hospitable."

In a postscript to this letter—of which the latter part of the MS. is a little more wildly erratic than even his ordinary penmanship of the period—he apologises for the writing, "as a needle and a lump of black mud are the only writing implements at hand."

A letter of 2nd October, also from Tintagel, gives an account of one of his seaside escapes:

"The aforesaid * came to see me, who have had an adventure which might have been serious but has only resulted in laming one foot for a day or two, I hope. . . . I had to run round a point of land which the sea was rising round, *or* be cut off in a bay of which to my cost I had just found the cliffs impracticable; so without boots or stockings I just ran at it and into the water and up or down over some awfully sharp and shell-encrusted rocks which cut my feet to fragments, had twice to

* A boy friend staying in the neighbourhood.

plunge again into the sea, which was filling all the coves and swinging and swelling heavily between the rocks ; once fell flat in it, and got so thrashed and licked that I might have been —— in ——'s clutches [alluding to characters in a story], and at last got over the last reef and down on the sand of a safe bay, a drenched rag, and with feet that just took me home (three-quarters of a mile or so and uphill mainly with stones) half in and half out of the boots which I had just saved with one hand ; and then the right foot began to bleed like a pig, and I found a deep cut which was worse than any ever inflicted by a birch to the best of my belief, for it was *no end* bad yesterday, and to-day makes it hopeless to walk except on tiptoe, but as I wouldn't have it dressed or bothered I hope it will soon heal."

In a later letter (October 26th) he says : " My foot is well enough now to be quite serviceable, and after full three weeks' close and often solitary confinement, I enjoy getting out among the downs and cliffs so much that I hardly know if I shall be able to tear myself away from my *last* chance of the sea this week."

The autumn of that year found us again both in London, and he was a frequent guest at my father's house at Chelsea. I think it was at that time that he wrote some chapters of a novel, which never saw the light, or, as far as I know, was completed. He used to read me bits of the MS. of an afternoon when he happened to come

in. I do not know what was the plot of the story, but I recollect some of the characters—one being the bright young lovable schoolboy he delighted in portraying, in constant scrapes, but noble and honourable through all; and a tutor, who bid fair to be the “villain of the piece.” There was a description of a bathing-place under the rocky cliffs, taken, no doubt, from the scenes of his Cornwall scrambles. The plot was in no way connected with his late novel, “Love’s Cross Currents.”

During one of our residences in London, Algernon took my father and me to see Dante Rossetti’s studio and house. The artist received us most kindly, and showed us his treasures, paintings, and pencil sketches. The remembrance of that visit often comes back to me when I come across the paintings I then saw for the first time.

My marriage in 1865, and subsequent residence for much of the year in Scotland, naturally caused something of a gap in our constant correspondence and intercourse, though he was always the same when we did meet. I have been unable to trace the letter he wrote when I announced to him my engagement, and said that as he had always been to me like an elder brother, I should like to feel that I had his approval. I know that he did write most kindly, saying that “If it was A. or any of my sisters, I could not feel more sincerely

interested," or words to that effect. Another short letter in answer to one on business is equally kind.

"Atalanta in Calydon" astonished the world of literature that same summer; and a presentation copy in white vellum, with the exquisite gold-shell ornamentation designed by D. Rossetti, and which had been minutely described to me while under discussion was among the most valued of my wedding gifts.

We met, not long after, when both visiting at an uncle's (Lord Ashburnham's) house in the country; and though nothing of particular moment occurred, I chiefly remember lively and merry games in the evening with him and the large party of cousins, such games as "consequences" and the like.

Algernon often visited my mother after my father's death. He chiefly enjoyed staying near the sea, his own old home having passed into other hands. He continued to love bathing and swimming all his life, and only absence from the sea prevented his enjoyment of this pursuit.

Gradually, with the passing of years, the old correspondence was taken up again; on his part, at all events, with no less of the old brightness and energy. And in the occasional visits to the Putney home—where, in due course, children and grandchildren were allowed to make the acquaintance of "Cousin Hadji," old times and memories

were called up, old and new books were looked at and discussed, and hardly an old joke found to be forgotten.

These cannot be called *early* memories, and my reminiscences must draw to a close. They may be interesting as showing a side of the poet's character unknown to the world, yet surely not the less honourable and lovable. I never met with a character more thoroughly loyal, chivalrous, and—though some of his utterances may seem to contradict it—reverent-minded. His veneration for the aged, for parents, women and little children—the simple worship of infancy, of which he has left us so many exquisite records—are unlike any other man's that I ever knew. And whatever his religious opinions were or were not, however much they had departed from those of our upbringing—as doubtless they did in later days—I never, in our years of unfettered and most familiar intercourse, remember him to have said anything to shock or distress me, or anything that was undesirable for me, as child or girl, to hear. And I would most emphatically assert that however such change of views as I have mentioned might—as it unavoidably must—have caused pain, it never for a moment interfered with or lessened the love, loyalty and reverence given by Algernon to his own family, or their affectionate intercourse with him.

In this connection it is perhaps not unfitting that I should say a few words about a circumstance likely to have caused some surprise and misapprehension shortly after his death, and to have been liable to an entirely mistaken interpretation. I allude to the absence of any reference to his family in his will.

Algernon was before all things utterly unbusinesslike. It is not too much to say that his attitude towards money matters, and business of any kind, was that of a child—entirely irresponsible. He simply left all such, during the last forty years of his life at any rate, to Mr. Watts-Dunton, the friend and adviser in whom he placed the most implicit faith. No one who knows the terms of affection that existed between Algernon and his nearest relatives to the last, can for the moment think that the omission of their names from his testamentary document was due to any possible coolness or lack of affection. I know it has been alleged that religious differences had made a breach between him and his family, and for this statement I can positively affirm that there was no foundation whatever. His letters to his family, through a long course of years, absolutely disprove any such assertion, even were no other testimony forthcoming.

With all his tremendous fund of wit or nonsense,

nothing profane, vulgar or "risqué" ever cropped up. His parodies of the didactic or moral style of nursery rhyme and story are inimitably ludicrous, often full of a fine satire, but absolutely harmless.

I find among the letters from Cornwall a few more points of general interest which I may be allowed to quote before closing. These are some remarks upon a newly-published set of poems by Tennyson. He says :

"How satisfied I am that [your] opinion of Tennyson's *last* should so exactly coincide with mine. After the four great ones you mention I put the 'Valley of Caunteretz,' which I think very musical and perfect. Boadicea is in Galliambics, a metre in which there is only one other poem extant, the 'Atys' of Catullus; the rules are too long and too intricate to give here, even if I remembered the whole scheme, which I don't; but it is in Cookesley's Eton edition of 'Catullus' prepared for the 'young mind,' where you may safely seek it. I *tried* . . . to do my week's verses in it once, and my tutor said it was no metre at all and he wouldn't take them, because it was an impertinence to show such a set up, so it counted as if I had done nothing, and the consequences were tragic."

In another letter he refers to the episode again :

"I need not say that I have *not* the pluck to try my hand again at Galliambics. . . . I should feel at every line as if I were writing down my own name in the bill: besides I might make

false quantities—and *then!* . . . And *then* I showed my verses indignantly (*after* the catastrophe) to another master, and he said they were very good, and there was but one small slip in them, *hard* as the metre was ; and I told my tutor with impudent triumph (knowing he had done his very worst), and he was shut up I can tell you . . . but that did not heal the cuts or close the scars which had imprinted on the mind and body of — [a fictitious schoolboy character with whom he identifies himself here], a just horror of strange metres.”

Surely it does not add to Eton’s fair records that she should thus have failed to recognize genius, and given punishment as the meed of an exceptionally skilful, if erratic, piece of work !

The painful association with the “strange metre” clings to him through more pages, for in another letter, in which he recommends “the two Iphigenias of Euripides” as a study, saying :

“They are generally very easy, and if you find the choruses hard you can skip or reserve them quite well.”

He specially recommends the “Iphigenia in Aulis”—

“the tents and stars and sea all stand out so clearly in the first few verses, which are in the familiar and *fondly* remembered anapæstic metre—none of your *blessed* Galliambics or such like ‘impertinent eccentricities,’ as they were *well* called in my case.”

The "fond remembrance" points to our *bouts rimés* games, in which we frequently amused ourselves by using the anapæstic metre. But, however he might speak or write of others, every metre was docile and plastic in his hands; as he said once jestingly to me, he thought he had tamed them or broken them all in, to do what he wanted. One, which seems peculiarly his own, is founded on the old English line:

"They shall ride upon ocean wide with hempen bridle and
horse of tree,"

which he gave me as a sample and measure of the metre when I audaciously attempted to "play with it" myself.

I know no more beautiful example of his anapæstic work than a fragmentary translation of a portion of "The Rhythm of Bernard de Morlaix," done, I think, rather at my instigation, during his long stay with us in 1864. We had been looking at Dr. Neale's well-known version opposite the Latin original, which is in the metre above named. It was on a Sunday morning; and I coming in from church found him sitting in the bow window of our library with this paper, and he said: "While you have been playing the organ I have been making anapæsts for you" (or words to that effect). I give the extract in full, and those acquainted with the original can

appreciate the skill and force and faithfulness of the rendering.

SPECIMEN OF A PROJECTED VERSION OF
BERNARD'S RHYTHM.

O land without guilt, strong city, safe built in a marvellous
place,
I cling to thee, ache for thee, sing to thee, wake for thee,
watch for thy face :
Full of cursing and strife are the days of my life ; with their
sins they are fed,
Out of sin is the root, unto sin is the fruit, in their sins they
are dead.
No deserving of mine can make answer to thine, neither I into
thee ;
I a child of God's wrath, made subject to death, what good
thing is in me ?
Yet through faith I require thee, through hope I desire thee,
in hope I hold fast,
Crying out, day and night, that my soul may have sight of
thy joy at the last.
Me, even me hath the FATHER set free, and hath bidden
come in ;
In sin hath He found me, from sin hath unbound me, and
purged me of sin.
In His strength am I glad, whom my weakness made sad ; I
that slept am awake ;
With the eyes that wept, with the spirit that slept, I give
thanks for His sake.
Things weak He makes sure, things unclean He makes pure,
with His fresh watersprings ;
Throughout all lands He goeth, for all things He floweth, and
halloweth all things.
O home of salvation, a chosen nation, a royal race
Doth build and possess thee, increase thee and bless thee,
engird and embrace ;
Every heart boweth down to that grace which doth crown
thee, O Sion, O peace !
Time is there none in thee, stars neither sun in thee rise not
nor cease ;

34 THE BOYHOOD OF SWINBURNE

Of the saints art thou trod, and made glorious of God ; thou
art full of thy Lord ;
And the sound of thee rings from the great ten strings of the
decachord.
Thou hast lilies made sweet for their maiden feet who were
clothed with lowliness ;
And roses blood-red, as a saint's blood shed, in the beauty of
holiness.
With His Wings He shall cover thee, He that rules over thee
even the Son,
The Mystic Lion, the Lamb out of Sion, the God which is
One ;
Purged of all revelling, clear of all travailing, pure of all strife,
Land of glad hours, made fair with new flowers, and sweet
with new life.

I have now, I think, put down my principal early recollections of my cousin. Numberless little traits may be omitted, as many more, doubtless, have passed into the mists of oblivion. When people are very familiar they do not take note of many things which might strike more casual acquaintance.

I shall only be too glad if the reminiscences, imperfect as they are, may serve to fill up gaps in any finished life which may be given to the world ; too proud if any word of mine may help that world to know more of his fearlessness, his manliness, his highmindedness, tenderness, and infinite condescension. To us who knew him he will ever be less the brilliant and epoch-making genius than the affectionate loyal-hearted kinsman whom to know was to love.

EXTRACTS FROM
THE PRIVATE LETTERS OF
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE letters of Swinburne from which the following extracts are drawn were placed in my hands by his youngest and last surviving sister before her death, with full permission to make any use of them in the sketch I proposed to publish. It is always a difficult and delicate matter to make a selection, among private letters, of what is allowable or advisable to publish—especially in consideration of the extreme dislike to publicity shared by the writer and the receivers of such letters as are before us. They were found however to contain so many interesting references, so many exquisite descriptions of places and persons, and so many sentiments and expressions of personal opinion, as to throw in various cases a fresh light upon the character of the great man who wrote them, and to place that character before the world in quite a new aspect. Thus I have allowed myself to quote freely from the descriptive passages, and in the quotations of a

more intimate kind I endeavoured to choose those that reveal his true nature, and unaltered affection for his family.

I have endeavoured to keep the excerpts more or less together, according to their subjects—whether relating to distinguished persons, foreign travel, descriptions of country, and of children, or concerned with his own works ; and the more personal extracts, as showing the terms on which he stood with his relatives—giving the periods as far as possible in chronological order. The years are not in all cases given, but the references and the handwriting enable them to be placed with fair accuracy.

Swinburne's handwriting underwent a considerable change during his lifetime. As a schoolboy and even in his Oxford days, it is small and cramped, requiring some trouble in deciphering. Later, it becomes larger and distincter, though often exceedingly rugged—especially after he had sustained an injury to the wrist. At the middle period it shows quite a clear small type of character, and last of all becomes very bold and distinct, much larger, but really easier to read than type-script.

The first batch of letters are the earliest in the collection, and give an account of the writer's first visit to foreign countries, at the age of



THE LADY JANE SWINBURNE.



eighteen, in company with his maternal uncle, Colonel the Honourable Thomas Ashburnham.

JOURNEY TO WIESBADEN IN 1855

To his Mother

Cologne,

July 18th, 1855.

We have come thus far on our way safe and well, though Uncle Tom seems rather tired. Last night we slept at Liège, and the night before at Calais. Lord Sandwich accompanied us from London to Aix-la-Chapelle, and was very good-natured; he walked with me over Liège and showed me the old Bishop's Palace, with its great cloisters. I liked the old city very much; it is so beautifully placid, down among the hills in a valley, and the country about it is most beautiful; very like Mounces* on a larger scale, and a little less wild, but that was atoned for by other kinds of beauty: it struck me more than any other part of the country we have yet gone through. All the hills are covered with woods, but here and there they open into smooth green lawns, and break into ravines where the streams are exactly like those of Mounces, and the water

* His grandfather's shooting property in Northumberland—evidently very high praise, and the comparison occurs not seldom in describing scenery.

just the moss-water colour. One place was so like the Tyne just below Keeldar, the railway turned suddenly and curved round along the side of a steep hill, so that we could see some time before where the turn was ; and the sun was out brightly although we left Liège in pouring rain and mist. The whole way from Liège hither was so perfectly lovely that I grudged the speed of the railway by which half the beauty was lost.

It was very funny landing at Calais and seeing the difference of appearance and hearing nothing but French : the hotels at each of our former resting-places were much better than this one, and Cologne is *awfully* dirty ! The trains are very puzzling, and at Malines we waited an hour and a quarter.

Now I have got the coast clear for the Cathedral here, and really now I am come to it I don't know what to say. Such things are not to be *jabbered* of. The magnificence bewildered me on entering, the large arches and beautiful windows and the enormous size of the whole building ; it was worth coming from anywhere to see. Uncle Tom was so good as to come with me to the Cathedral as the guide spoke only German, tho' I don't think he wanted to come : and waited while I saw the relics and crosses, etc., in the Sacristy, and the Shrine of the Three Kings,

which on ordinary days like this costs 6 francs to see, which I willingly paid out of my own money and cheap for such beautiful sights.

The crosses of gold and jewels were most beautiful, but the old Priest who showed them said they were very heavy, and shook his head and smiled at the enormous one of silver which the Bishop carries in Processions. How any one can, I wonder ; it is much higher than a man, and the biggest of them all. The tomb of St. Engelbrecht in the Sacristy is one of the most beautiful things I saw there, all the carved work and images silvergilt. But the shrine was best of all. The Priest removed a part at the head, and showed me the 3 skulls crowned and the names written in rubies. The bare dark skulls looked strange, but not, I thought, ugly or out of place in the diadems of gold and pearls. Every pillar of the shrine is of a different mosaic pattern. Down the sides are the Apostles and Prophets ; at the foot the Passion in separate groups. The expression of the faces of each figure (one of Our Saviour particularly) looked wonderfully true on so small a scale. The 4 pearls at the top, and some other of the jewels about it were enormous ; I never saw such a size. This is the best description I can give of the Shrine ; there are, I am afraid, many other things well worth seeing that

I had not time for. I grudge especially the view of the whole Cathedral from above, and a closer view of some of the east windows, the choir and the old frescoes. But I trust some day that we may all come here and see everything !

From the Cathedral the guide and I went to the Church of S. Ursula, and I saw the skulls and bones. One, they call it S. Margaret's, has all the teeth and is *too* horrid. The carved work of the Golden Chamber (where all the bones of the 11000 virgins are) was made by the Huns, the Priest said, and is very beautiful. There were all sorts of relics. Some sounded very funny ; there was a thumb of S. Maternus and a tooth of S. Appollina. The old Priest was very nice, I think you would have liked him ; he was so gentle and reverent that I took a great fancy to him, he showed me all the work and all sorts of things in different parts ; and he said I could see S. Ursula's tomb if I waited till the service was over, which I did, and I felt quite miserable, it was such a wretched feeling that while they all were praying, old men and tiny children kneeling together, I was not one of them, I was shut out as it were. I could have sat down and cried, I was so unhappy. How I do trust that some day all will be able to worship together and no divisions and jealousies " keep us any longer asunder " !

When the service was over I got over these feelings in examining the tomb, which was very beautiful, and seeing the rest of the Church in which was nothing but the bones, which one sees through holes in the walls, with lattices all along the sides of the Chancel.

I wanted very much to see S. George's church which is said to be so beautiful, but had no time.

I walked quickly from S. Ursula's church to the Hotel, which is a long way and the streets anything but clean. . . . I have got a bottle of eau-de-Cologne at the great huge shop here, Farina's. Certainly, as the "Handbook" notices, Cologne wants all its eau-de-Cologne to counteract certain other perfumes which its streets emit; and I cannot say that I think it would be at all a nice city but for this *eau* and the Cathedral. The guide asseverates that it once contained as many churches as there are days in the year: now there are only 25, I believe.

To the same

Wiesbaden,
July 17th, 1855.

We arrived here safe on Saturday. . . . We had fine weather for our journey, and the Rhine is very beautiful and I think I should have enjoyed

it much but for seeing it in a muddle of smoking and jabbering fellow-travellers, and missing half what was worth seeing on board of a nasty crowded steamer. I wish we could all go and see it comfortably together and stop and see whenever we liked ; for I could not, though I tried hard, take any pleasure in steaming through fine scenery post-haste and missing half. It was very provoking but I don't think I want any more felicity-hunting ; and I can't say either that I like the prospect of a month here, tho' the gardens and lake are very pretty. . . . I have just had my first German lesson and like the man very much, and he says he is very satisfied with my attention, etc. . . .

E—— will be happy to hear that we are domiciled with a Crimean soldier, Captain Jolliffe I believe his name is, who was at Alma and Balaklava. Also she will be glad to hear that he employs himself on a crusade against rabbits, and has a dog which kills them to admiration.

We have got a capital courier, and the night we slept at Coblenz he and I had a walk over the hills after sunset, and managed a good night view of the Rhine and Moselle near their junction, and the surrounding country. Certainly the river is beautiful, and some of the castles very grand among their steep rocks, and the woods

and vineyards close down to the great broad stream, only the steamers were so dirty and smoky.

To the same

Wiesbaden,
July 28, 1855.

Last Tuesday was the duke's birthday and there was an inspection of the soldiers and great rejoicings and salutes for his coming only he did not come at all ; and the ways were hung with garlands and the lake was illuminated with coloured lamps hung all the way round which looked very pretty, by night.

And we have been to see the chapel built by the late Emperor of Russia for the burial of the Duchess or somebody who married the Duke of Bavaria. It is very beautiful, the Altar is marble, the rood-screen painted in water-colours (I think) with figures of the Apostles, and her monument is very fine ; and they give one list slippers to put on for fear of scratching the marble. Outside it is all carved on the portals, and has huge gilt doors. And we drove through the woods to the Duke's hunting-place and went all over it, and there was a splendid view ; and we walked to Saurenberg (?) to see a very old

ruin, the oldest castle built in the country A.D. 1234 (I believe it was) and the old man who showed it had fought with Napoleon in the Peninsula and against him at Waterloo. I gathered some flowers off the walls, which I send for the others if they care. It is a fine view, rather Mouncees-like country, beyond ; and a rather pretty walk by a stream all the way ; it is 3 miles off.

To the same

Wiesbaden,
August 4th, 1855.

He * and I walked yesterday to the most lovely place on earth—a sort of mixture of the prettiest parts of Mouncees and Capheaton, the cave of the Robber Lutweis. I longed for you all to be there, especially E., for it was admirably robberish ; the old brigand lived there about the middle of the last century. He had good taste, certainly. The way thither is first up a steep hill, dotted with woods, by the most dark and wild of rambling paths to the Lockene, a sort of round building on columns whence you see the most of the Rhine and Moselle, and the further country. Then you strike right off thro’

* His uncle.

the forest by a most lovely path, and go up and down for a long way till you come to a sort of bank or wall of rocks, up which you get (for they are not bare rocks, except here and there on the top, the sides slope down, and so are very accessible) then on both sides the ground sinks and gives you the loveliest wood-scenery view that ever was seen: then you descend by another steep winding path and find a road, a stream with natural stepping-stones, which you cross—reaching a steep bank on the other side, and there is a most beautiful view of rocks which contain *his* cave, looking most inaccessible; just almost a single narrow and long platform, which might easily be defended by robbers against any amount of soldiery; it is very steep, and the cave and rocks so hidden by an outer wall of trees whose branches protect it, that one might pass it often and never discover the soldiers *lurking* behind; in front you descend by a steep track, paved with red slugs (the only drawback to these woods) to a long meadow stretching far away between the woods which rise steeply on both sides. Through this meadow runs the stream which supplies the robbers in their high rock, towering above, with the best of pure spring water. I always drink some when I pass, it only begins a little higher up, and there are forests of wild raspberries and

red-berried elders, with which latter Uncle T. fell in love, the colour is so beautiful at a little distance, and we are bringing home some seeds. We thought it would look lovely about East Dene. This meadow continues for a long way, then the woods . . . and for miles and miles you see nothing but this endless forest, high up two rocks and mountains, and, perched between the eminences, the Duke's hunting seat looks down on us far away. It was a bright but cool day, and *too* delightful ! We went home by another way which took us into an opening above a steep wooded and winding valley, giving a beautiful view of Mayence and the neighbouring country. All the forest is intersected by the most exquisite paths, winding up and down, and is full of so many beautiful places that the attempt to describe them would be endless ; judge of the rest by what you have heard, imperfect and faint as my description is. In the evening I went out again with Mr. C—— and had another long wood ramble ; we saw among other things, the Weeping Oak ; it hangs droopingly like a willow, and bears no fruit ; the only one in Germany, and all the visitors come to see it.

To the same

Wiesbaden,

August 12, 1855.

To-morrow early we start to sleep, I believe, at Wurtzburg and next day at Nuremberg, where we stay 3 or 4 days. It is pleasant to move again and see more places, but for some reasons I am sorry to leave Wiesbaden, especially the Forest. . . . I went to Mayence yesterday with Uncle T.'s servant, and saw the Cathedral; a fine one, but not to be seen after Cologne. There are some fine monuments,—one that of S. Boniface, erect, of red-sandstones, which interested me, as I look upon him rather as *ours*, being the patron of Bonchurch. Another of an old Crusader (very famous for its beauty) had the loveliest face you can think of, a smiling still expression, and the figure so perfect that it might move and not surprise one. The Cathedral has been terribly battered and smashed about by repeated bombardments, and little of the old part is left; but what there is they say is older almost than any other. Also, which is very rare, it has a high Altar and Choir at each end, that in the west (with splendid carvings and windows) is used on Sundays, the E. one on weekdays only. The cloisters are beautiful, and the Chapterhouse

with the old Archbishops' tombs; one, Bp. Adalbert I., was seized and imprisoned by the Emperor: whereon his loving subjects of Mayence rose and seized the Emperor and held *him* prisoner till they got back their Bishop safe and sound; and he granted the citizens great privileges, to reward their loyalty. It was an enormously rich diocese and the Bps. were very powerful I believe. In the cloisters is the original monument of the Minstrel Frauenlob (Praise-women) so named for his courtesy; all is battered away but the head, which I thought beautiful. The Bishop's arms are emblazoned above in the roof. I then went up the tower to the belfry; saw the city and view of the country, with the junction of the Rhine and Maine below; and then up a ladder above the belfry into the highest point, a round gallery within the upper dome, with open-work sides, to the horror and alarm of the showman, who assured me that people hardly ever went up; but of course this determined me to go, and I did, whereof I am rather conceited, especially as the great clock struck four, making a most awful noise just as I was halfway up the ladder, and made the whole concern shake and rattle. The view was very fine.

[The following group of letters, of an earlier

period than the rest, are taken by themselves, and form the only record of a part of the writer's life at Oxford, and his conscientious work, for a time, at the legal studies which proved so irksome and contrary to the real bent of his mind and genius.]

To the same

Union,
Nov. [1859].

I hope, although I have had no news of it, that you are safely settled at Pau : I hope when you have time, to get a line from one of you. I have myself been rather busy since I last heard from A. and E. at Tours, in working (unhappily too late) for my first examination in Classics—which turns out a failure. I *had* hoped to get it done, and have my way clear to work for honours in the spring. As it is, I shall have them both on my hands at once, and I need not add, feel ashamed of myself. In my history work it will I hope make no difference ; and at all events I have it only to think of just now ; and shall be able to go at it in peace. Being here, I can ask the “historical” authorities how to set at it, with a special view to their requirements.

There is no other Oxford news that I know of, of equal importance with *my* work, prospects,

etc., except the presence of a Gracious Prince of Wales and the rapturous excitement of a favoured city. He comes here to hear the speeches and throws the President of the Union into a feeble but happy ecstasy: filling also the local papers with marvellous rumours of his dress, dinner, manners, suite and behaviour. . . .

To the same

Nanestock,
Ash Wednesday, 1860.

It is a pity that all the law they make us learn is mediæval and obsolete or I might cut out L—— and *do* the family on my own hook. By the by, if you want to get a better account of the whole question of history at Oxford, I recommend you to get an article by a great friend of Mr. Stubbs published in No. 1 of "*Bentley's Quarterly Review*," March /59. I have just read it and I think it would interest you if you care to know about my reading and chances.

You may have seen in the *Guardian* that there is a prize at Oxford of £50 (I think) for a poem on the subject of Sir John Franklin and the late discoveries.* I have written for it and shown it

* This poem in the rough MS., on 11 sheets of thin foolscap, folded and *addressed for postage* to his sister Edith at Pau in 1860, is now in my possession. (ED.)

to Mr. Stubbs, who advises it to be sent in, and declares it *ought* to have the prize. I wish it may, but very greatly doubt. (Don't suppose I gave it too much time: it didn't take two mornings' work.) As there must be two copies (for there is a law against sending in such things in one's handwriting lest the examiners should know whose the poem is before the prize is awarded), I will send you mine as soon as the other copy is made, if you would like to see it. If I could get money to publish any others, or some of them, which have been very successful in MS. lately, I should do myself the honour of reading you such select passages as not being too mediæval or Shakespearian are not disqualified from family entertainment. I shall be anxious to see how you like the one mentioned above.

To the same

Nanestock,
March 11, 1860.

As soon as I can get my verses copied you shall have them—with much gratitude for your generous offer. But I have thought—or rather Mr. Stubbs started the shining idea—that if I send you one copy some of the others might copy it out for me—which would make all safe: and as June the 1st

is the day for sending it, it would give plenty of time.

I have the honour to announce that the one really awful piece of work before me is now behind me. I have completed my analysis of Blackstone's law. All that remains is by comparison to the hard parts of that work as pleasant reading as Dumas. . . . As to my Oxford sojourn, I can tell you now. About a week after Easter I go up. If all is well I shall have to stay the whole term. For the little examination is at the beginning and the great one at the end. . . .

To the same

Nanestock,
April 15, 1860.

I am so busy just now and in so many ways that you must make excuses for my letters if they are short and few. This week probably I return to Oxford: when there I will tell you how to direct to me.

I think, thanks mainly to Mr. Stubbs' help and trouble, I may expect to return with a good piece of the work done for good. As I told you before, the hardest technical work and such as would be difficult to do alone is gone through. An American book on International Laws is my chief enemy

just now, but I hope to settle him in a few days.

. . . When I have done with routine work I think of taking *periods* to read in contemporary books if I can keep up my present leaning towards history. I got out (the last time I was at Wallington) all sorts of things about Mary Stuart of the most exciting kind, down to an inventory of her gowns, which gave me great satisfaction, as they were very nice colours, and showed she had an eye for painting. I am in the meantime taking in (at Oxford) either Charlemagne or St. Louis—possibly both. That is the sort of history I like—live biographical chronicle, not dead constitutional records like the respected Hallam's, over whom Mr. Stubbs and I (neither without execrations) have been breaking our teeth more or less for months. . . .

The following letter contains an account of the riding accident alluded to in the "recollections."

To the same

Oxford,
June 5, 1860.

I got your letter yesterday and was very glad to hear of you safe in London after all the rain, wind and snow. I am glad, too, that now you

are in England I can write to you myself word of what I would not have told you while at a distance. About the beginning of last week I had a bad fall from a horse in leaping a gate. It was in the end lucky that I alighted full on my chin and the lower part of my face—but as some teeth were splintered, the jaw sprained and the lips cut up it was not pleasant. For a week nearly I have been kept in bed and fed on liquids, and still I can eat nothing but crumb of bread and such like. But I am up to-day and able to write, and quite well otherwise (*jaws* excepted) only of course not very strong. The Dr. *did* last week prohibit ideas of trying to bring my ill-fated work through to some end or other (certainly the Fates *are* against my reading for honours in history), but I must stay a day or two longer to try. If I really *cannot* do enough to get fairly through and take a decent place in the list—then of course I shall not try but come up to you in London this week. If not (that is if I do go in) I shall be 10 days or a fortnight longer. . . . Mrs. Johnson has been most kind—calling constantly to ask after and sit with me during the past week : I persuaded her not to send word of my accident through—until I could write myself to tell you there was no danger or serious hurt. (I hope even the cut and sprain will be well when I see you.) I thought it was

not news to meet and worry you at second-hand on a first arrival. . . .

[The following undated but much later letter refers to his return to Oxford as a visitor.]

To the same

Ball. Coll.,
April 26th.

As Jowett has kindly pressed me to stay till Monday I write to let you know my plans and to ask you if (as I expect) a book has arrived for me from Dulau's (Victor Hugo's new great poem, which I wish to review after reading and as quickly as I can) to be good enough to forward it to me by the next post, though I am afraid it is rather bulky. My visit has been wholly pleasant, but that through too much confidence in the word of a deceiving porter all my luggage was left at Reading till the Monday, and I had twice to appear in the evening before a *Galaxy of Fashion, Rank, and Talent* in a morning dress, and to borrow a clean shirt of the Master. He is really the most hospitable of men; when I said this morning I thought it must be time for me to be on the move, he told me I was always welcome for as long as I pleased to stay, and must pay him another visit at the end of the summer term . . .

[The following letter to his eldest sister, dated Dec. 31st, was written in 1863, during the winter spent with us at Northcourt. It seems the only one extant of that particular period.]

Northcourt,
December 31st.

. . . I owe you thanks for more letters than one, which please accept in full. As to the pictures on your projected journey, I am sorry to say I know nothing of Genoa, as I was only there for a minute under violent rain ; but I believe it does not shine in galleries, the effects of sea and history being its strong points. It certainly lies open beautifully to the salt lake. But at Milan you will have enough to do. 1st, the Ambrosian Library, where there is a Virgil illuminated or painted in small by Simone Menni (?) for Petrarca ; *also* the lock of hair and autograph letters of Madonna Lucrezia Estense Borgia : which please salute respectfully for me. 2nd (or 1st if you prefer) the *Brera*. At the end of one of the smaller rooms there is a picture for which I would give the eyes out of my head if I could see it without them : a feast in the open air, with music, men and women being played to : by Bonifazio : one of the most perfect pictures I know of any Venetian painter. In one corner—that you may

recognize it the sooner—there are two pages standing—a white boy tickling a black one who tries not to laugh. The Raffaele is one of those moist and sugary pictures which do not attract me ; but you will have to look at it. Some Crivellis, too, though unequal and not lovely, are worth looking over. Look also at some three or four small narrow pictures in the corners (unless changed) of the further large room on the left as you enter by the Luini gallery ; single figures of saints standing separately in little meadows full of wild flowers, by Gentile da Fabriano ; very plain and *quaint*, as people call it, but with great simple beauty in them, unless my recollection flatters them : the foregrounds in flower, especially. Look, too, at Gentile Bellini's " St. Mark preaching at Alexandria." One or two small Carpaccios are worth looking up ; but that great and delicious painter is only to be seen fairly in the Venice Academy ; though he has one very lovely large picture at Brescia, in the same gallery with a grand portrait by Moroni. (These and Titian's St. Afra are the main things to see at Brescia if you stop at that city, which on this account it is worth while to do.) I don't remind you that the supreme crown and glory of Milan is Leonardo's Last Supper, in spite of much battering of French shots and of Austrian stabling. To it of course

you will be carried off at once ; and you will not need to be told to look out for Luini's, as you will see nothing else in the Brera to speak of till you are through no end of rooms and galleries. These are the chief things I remember on the Italian side of the frontier. If I were with you I should remember many more. If you get to Milan you ought not to be able to resist crossing the border to Verona, Padua, and Venice, taking in Vicenze. There is matter in all these names for a dozen letters. At Verona, mind you *do* San Zenone thoroughly ; and as the Austrians won't give you access to the great bridge look at it from thence as you leave the church ; and go into the crypts, for San Z. is great in stone and metal work. In the extreme crypt there is a Crucifixion in stone, which is exactly like an Egyptian work ; just the cut of beard and turn of feature of our Egyptian relics at the Museum. I mean, of course, the human monuments, or busts, not the dog-headed gods. Examine all you can of the groups on the great metal gates, which are splendid if you make out the Old Testament subjects, or even if you don't. Also the monuments of the Scalas, Dante's Can Grande among the lot, which are too beautiful for any other city. These must be hints enough to start with, if you want to see what I saw and remember with most liking ; which I hope you

will do. I write as much as possible what you ask for, both on that account and because I have not much other material for a letter in any degree worth writing or receiving. My greatest pleasure just now is when M——* practises Handel on the organ; but I can hardly *behave* for delight at some of the choruses. I care hardly more than I ever did for any minor music; but *that* is an enjoyment which wants special language to describe it, being so unlike all others. It crams and crowds me with old and new verses, half-remembered and half-made, which new ones will hardly come straight afterwards: but under their influence I have done some more of my Atalanta which will be among my great doings if it keeps up with its own last scenes throughout.

I repay M—— to the best of my ability but cheaply, by blundering over Greek verbs with her. She keeps her energy fresh by her versatility. I wish you were here, and as quiet as I have happily been all this time, thanks to their kindness, instead of being pestered by strangers on a foreign coast—and that the frowzy coast of a blue pond.† We saw the re-launch of a lifeboat the other day, but as the sea was smooth it was only a pretty sight, not an excitement. I walked once over to the

* The editor.

† The Mediterranean—for which and its coast resorts he always cherished an undisguised contempt and dislike. (ED.)

end of the downs above Freshwater Gate : it is the finest scenery of sea-downs I ever saw, and all Mottistone and Afton Downs were new to me.

To his Mother

Tummil Bridge, Pitlochry, N.B.,
[Early 'seventies] July 24th.

. . . I certainly am, and Jowett has remarked it to me, very much stronger and up to far more walking and climbing work than I was last year. We made a party last Sunday week to the top of Schehallion, the highest mountain in this part of the Highlands ; and I have to-day discovered a plan of bathing in two parts of the same stream at once which is very comforting ; we go into the pool below one waterfall, swim up to the foot of it, and climb up the rocks it falls over, as there is plenty of room and foothold by the side of the torrent, and then plunge again into the pool above this and below a higher waterfall—returning finally of course down the rocks we came up and so into the lower pool again and out on the other side. The upper pool where we have been bathing regularly (weather permitting) for days past is a most lovely basin of sheer rock, safely accessible by descent in one place only ; when you jump in at the foot of the fall the impulse of the water

is so strong that it sends you spinning right across the pool, and it is all one can possibly do to swim back to the other side, though but two or three strokes off. It is really hot here on some days—to-day for instance—though of course fitful as to rain and sunshine. The great thunderstorms (as you perhaps know) have done awful damage in various parts of England, the country about Manchester especially, as I see in the county papers. It is a strange exceptional summer everywhere; you may have seen that the deaths in New York from sunstroke and other causes immediately brought on by the heat are counted by hundreds within the last few weeks. . . . I have nothing more to tell you, except of a very flattering petition conveyed to me in pressing terms from the conductors of a French journal for a poem (French of course), from my hand. As I like being recognized as a French poet as well as an English, I am writing them one on some music of Wagner's—I hope they won't mind the musician being a German. I hate them otherwise, but I must say the one good thing the Germans can do—music—they do so much better than any other people that no one even comes second. Jowett talks of going to some part of Germany—I think Bavaria or some southern province—when we break up;

but that I think will not be for some weeks. He would not go last year having too much good feeling to wish or to endure to be the witness of their rampant exultation over the plunder of France, and robbing of her provinces: which I like in him particularly, as his tendencies and connections are the reverse of mine, being much more in the German line than the French. . . .

To his Mother

The Pines, Putney Hill, S.W.,
November 26, 1882.

MY DEAREST M——,

On Friday morning Watts and I arrived about 7 or 8 o'clock from Paris, after five days' stay—five of the most rememberable days of my life.

On Monday (as you may have seen in the *Times*) I was invited to dinner at Victor Hugo's, and accordingly presented myself in a state of perturbation as well as delight before the greatest—I know—and I believe the best, man now living. No words can express his kindness of manner, as he said on taking my hand, "Je suis heureux de vous serrer la main comme à mon fils." I am delighted to say that he is even more wonderful—all things considered—for his age

than Mrs. Procter for hers. He will be eighty-one in February, and walked upright and firm without a stick. His white hair is as thick as his dark eyebrows, and his eyes are as bright and clear as a little child's. After dinner, he drank my health with a little speech, of which—tho' I sat just opposite him—my accursed deafness prevented my hearing a single word. This, however, was the only drawback—tho' certainly a considerable one—to my pleasure.

On Wednesday evening I went with Watts to the places in the stalls of the Théâtre Français provided for us by the great kindness of my friend and correspondent for a good many years now, Auguste Vacquerie, the chief editor of the *Rappel*, and all but a son to Victor Hugo. It was, as you probably know, the second night of the representation, on a Parisian stage, of a play which had been first acted on the same day fifty years before, and suppressed the next day by Louis Philippe's government, on account of a supposed allusion, in a single line, to the infamy of Citizen Philippe Egalité, that worthy monarch's worthy parent. This time *Le Roi s'amuse*—which Watts thinks Hugo's greatest work, second only to Shakespeare's *King Lear* in all the world of tragic poetry with which it can rightly be compared—was on the whole nobly acted and

worthily received. I was invited between the 3rd and 4th acts into the author's box, where I found him sitting in state, and in reply to his question, "Êtes vous content?" said I most certainly was, and ventured to ask if he did not approve of the chief actor, Got, in the part of Triboulet, which is supposed to be the most trying and overwhelming for an actor that ever was written (I should have thought Lear as bad, but Watts thinks the strain in the part of Triboulet must be even greater than that of Lear; and he knows far more of the stage than I do). Hugo replied that he did; and indeed it was generally very fine, as far as a deaf wretch can judge. There was not quite such a prolonged thunder of applause at the end as I expected: but Watts thinks this was merely due to the overpowering effect of the close, which is certainly the most terrible as well as pathetic catastrophe in any play except (again and of course) *King Lear*.

I have also made acquaintance with the translator of my Ode on the Statue of Victor Hugo and her husband, and (not least) their little girl. . . . She is the sweetest and brightest little person now going, and all the admiration lavished by one of the most brilliant circles in Paris on her beauty and cleverness has not—as far as I can see—made her in the least vain or affected.

Her mamma is a princess by birth and (as of course you will have anticipated) a Nihilist: a Russian. . . . She talks English as well as I do, and French as well as our common master Victor Hugo does. And she has a very pretty and pleasant house in the suburbs of Paris, with a splendid stud of horses, which she took me to see—among others, a most lovely Arabian, and a splendid Russian, the strongest-looking horse I ever saw, which I can quite believe will (as its mistress says) go anywhere and hold out for any time. Also, there was Dora's pony, which I have been describing to Bertie as eloquently as I can. Perhaps I need not add that Dora's mother is much taken with my poems on Bertie, some of which she has been so good as to translate to Victor Hugo, who has honoured them with his approbation—which, next to your liking them, is the most delightful tribute as well as the greatest honour that any work of mine ever received.

And now I will end this very egotistic letter, hoping it may find you all as well as it leaves me, and remain with best love,

Ever your most affectionate son.

To the same

June 17, 1883.

I am half out of my mind with gratitude and excitement at Victor Hugo's latest act of kindness in sending me his new book—the third and last part of a series of poems, the first part of which I began reading at East Dene in the summer vacation of 1859—twenty-four years ago—when it was just out—little dreaming I should live to earn the honour of receiving the last instalment of his greatest work (as I think it) from the hands of the greatest poet of the century. Certainly I have been very fortunate in the kindness I have always received from the great men who were the objects of my earliest reverence and enthusiasm as soon as I was old enough to have any belief or opinion of my own as to great men and their works.

To the same

Jan. 25, 1884.

. . . I have finished my verses on the great sunsets, but not the poem of which they are to form part—addressed to Victor Hugo on the opening of this year (his eighty-third—he will be eighty-two this month) and on the still increasing glories and varying beauties of his work, which

if possible grows more splendid and wonderful as the sunset draws nearer—tho' from all one sees or hears one may really hope he has years of work and enjoyment still before him among his friends and grandchildren. Of course you see the allegory that was at once suggested to me on looking at that glorious transfiguration of the sky a little before the sun set, which made everything above and around more splendid than ever it was at morning or at noon.

I hope you will not be really wearied by so long a letter—but I had (and have) two to thank you for, and to write to you is only less a pleasure than to get and read your letters—and I can truly say I have no greater pleasure than that.

To the same

May 21, 1885.

I cannot thank you enough or in such words as I ought for your kindness and sympathy with me in this great sorrow. Of course I should have been very unhappy at the news of the impending loss of the greatest man of our century and one of the best men of all centuries, even if I had had no personal cause for that regret which I know he would not wish any of us, who love and revere him to feel, because I know that

he has—not exactly wished for death, but felt so ready and all but wishful to be released from trouble, for a good while, that one ought hardly to grudge it him, after so many years of self-sacrifice : but his fatherly kindness to me personally—his goodness in accepting the tribute of my gratitude and admiration, and requiting it with such cordial and affectionate words both written and spoken—cannot but make me feel this great loss more than a stranger perhaps could—I say perhaps, because his life has been so spent in doing good deeds as well as producing great works that one must not pretend to guess how much the poor people who only know him as their best friend, and not as the greatest poet in the world, may feel. I am so glad that he has had the pleasure of knowing how they love him (did you see the telegram that said he had been so pleased to hear how anxiously they were waiting for a word of news of him, and sent them a message of thanks?), and I do think it does the greatest possible honour to Paris and to France that there should be this great deep universal feeling on such an occasion. I am afraid the English would not feel or show the same or anything like the same emotion of gratitude and love and reverence for their greatest man. To be sure, we have never had anybody who was

like Shakespeare and Milton and like Wilberforce or Howard all at once. When I think of his greatness as a poet and his goodness as a man combined, I really think sometimes that there never was or will be anybody like Victor Hugo.

My good and kind friend Madame Dorian has sent me telegrams of the worse or better symptoms—the last was a little more hopeful than the one before ; but I am not going to let myself hope too much. The day before yesterday, I was so unhappy that I could do nothing but walk and think—but that always does me good. I can *not* stay indoors and be resigned or distract my thoughts, but after a quick walk I do always feel more able to bear whatever has to be borne.

I send you my new book, and am sending a copy also to Aunt M. by this post—but it does seem rather trivial, when the greatest of all poets since Shakespeare is passing away, to think of one's own little bits of work. However, I hope you and sisters will accept it as the best I have to give. I want you to like the Hymns when I come and construe them to you ; they are modelled after the patterns in Archbishop Trench's " Sacred Latin Poetry," and I had been (vainly, in both senses of the word " vain ") flattering myself that Victor Hugo might like them : you know that before I was born he had begun writing

in defence of the old cathedrals and churches that were being "restored" and demolished, and reviving interest in sacred mediæval poetry when the fashion was to think it as barbarous and absurd as his early friend M. de Lamartine thought Dante.

To the same

May 25th, 1885.

I don't think *you* know by experience—as other people do—what the selfishness of great grief is with the run of men, like me, who cannot (hardly) think for five minutes together of anything that I ought to think of just yet. I thought I knew how much I loved as well as honoured the greatest man of our time, but I find I did not. He was so *very* kind to me—so fatherly—that nobody can quite understand all I feel; and I have not yet been able to get quite clear of the first stupid and bewildered sense of bereavement. And he looked when I saw him fully as robust and upright as Aunt J.—who is seven years his elder—and I did think we might hope to have him with us till he reached at least her present age. Those who knew him best and longest say that his goodness was even greater than his genius. I don't see how that could be

possible, even for an angel ; but I do believe it was as great.

When I think of his intense earnestness of faith in a future life and a better world than this, and remember how fervently Mazzini always urged upon all who loved him the necessity of that belief and the certainty of its actual truth, I feel very deeply that they must have been right—or at least that they should have been—however deep and difficult the mystery which was so clear and transparent to their inspired and exalted minds may seem to such as mine. They ought to have known, if any man ever did : and if they were right, I, whose love and devotion they requited with such kindness as I never could have really deserved, shall (somehow) see them again.

I should *very* much like to come down straight to you. . . . I know how good you would all be to me in my deep sorrow—but I think I had better deny myself that comfort for this reason. I am writing, or trying to write, an account of Victor Hugo's complete works—just simply a list of the labours of his life, with some slight attempt at a description or definition (or indication at least) of each (every phrase I can think of seems too presumptuous and pretentious, but I hope you will understand what I mean to *try* and do) :

and if I can manage, which (please heaven) I will if hard work can do it, I have promised to get it ready for the July number of the *Nineteenth Century*. It is all I can do (not for him, who wants nothing that man can do, and never could have wanted anything that *I* could, though he was so very good and generous in his acknowledgment of my attempts to express my thankfulness to him) ; but perhaps it may be of some use to others, and possibly of some gratification to his friends and mine : and I cannot well do this without having all his books (upwards of forty volumes) at hand for reference, and above all without having Watts at hand to give me his opinion on every little bit of the essay, paragraph by paragraph, as I get on with it ; for of course I want it to be as good in style and as complete in record as I can possibly make it ; and equally of course when I am writing on a subject which lies so near my heart I want a friend, who can criticize and sympathize at once, to tell me if I am keeping in the right line or not. It is so difficult to be sure of one's phrases, as to good tone and good taste, when one is writing for the public about anything which touches one's deepest feelings.

If I had time I would write to thank A. and A. [his sisters] for their letters, which—like yours,

and one from Aunt M.—have given me as much pleasure as anything can just now. . . .

To the same

June 18, 1885.

It seems very ungrateful to have been a whole fortnight in answering so precious a letter as your last ; but for three weeks I have done no writing but on one subject, and on that I have been at work morning, noon and night, I may almost say, without going out of the house : and by these means I have just managed to finish in time for the July number of the *Nineteenth Century* an article on “ The Work of Victor Hugo,” nearer 70 than 60 fcap. pages in length, and giving some account of 45 volumes which had to be consulted or referred to, studied or restudied, for the purpose. Watts, I may perhaps be allowed to say, thinks very highly of it as a compendious and complete account of the work done in literature during upwards of 70 years by the greatest writer of the age. His first book was written at sixteen, and his last appeared about eighteen months ago. I have—as you will see—given at least a word of notice to everything, so that a careful reader of my article will know thoroughly and exactly (as far as is possible considering the limits of an

article) the character and the date of each successive publication of its kind.

As to the pomp and publicity of the funeral ceremonies, it must be remembered that he was not only the greatest writer of his century, and of his country in any century (like Dante or Shakespeare), but also a great patriot, a public servant of the highest distinction, who had devoted and hazarded his life for the service of his country, who had suffered exile for upwards of twenty years, and the loss of every single thing he had in the world (he went into banishment with only a few pounds left for the support of his whole family) on account of his loyalty and fidelity. I think therefore that though he might have preferred (as I should) the quiet place of rest he had originally (I believe) chosen for himself at Villequier in Normandy beside his wife and daughter, it is much to the credit of his countrymen that they should have insisted on paying him all possible honour that a nation can pay to its greatest man, and that the value and importance of the ceremony as a proof and evidence of natural gratitude —never better deserved—must be allowed to outweigh every counter consideration of possible private or personal preference.

To the same

February 23rd, 1891.

I am glad that Mlle. Hugo's marriage has given me an opportunity of talking with you on a matter of so much interest as that about which you write. So far from being an "unbeliever," if you mean by that a materialist who is convinced that there is no future life, or an infidel, . . . Victor Hugo was so passionate and fervent a believer in a future life and a judgment to come that many good men who could not share his conviction regarded him, even to the last, as a fanatic or religious dreamer. "C'est mal de ne pas croire à mon Paradis," he said once to some friends who were arguing against his faith in a better world, "*mais vous verrez.*" (I may add here that Mazzini was so deeply and intensely possessed by the same faith that the only people I ever thought him the least little bit hard upon were atheists and materialists, who, however wrong or stupid they may be, are sometimes—of course—as good and honest and unselfish as others.)

To his Sisters

April 5th, 1897.

. . . Walter has given me (*in* a birthday present) a magnificent photograph (beautifully

framed) of Victor Hugo—taken standing on a lovely cliff in Guernsey, *and* in a lovely high wind which must have made the snapshot a miracle of luck and skill. It is a superb likeness—you can almost see the living light of his wonderful eyes.

To his eldest Sister

July 6, 1900.

Walter is very well again, but very busy ; as am I also, being engaged on a (?) short critical memoir of Victor Hugo (for a biographical dictionary) which must get itself finished by the end of this month. It is not a light task to undertake the record of a life of eighty-three years and a series of books that fill two great long shelves, without overlooking any point that ought not to be missed. . . .

To his youngest Sister

Ap. 24, '83.

. . . In reading "Autumn and Winter" you will remember that my poor dear friend George Powell, the most unselfish, generous, gentle and kind and affectionate of men, died last year just

about three months before Wagner—the man who was to him what Victor Hugo is to me. As soon as I heard of the latter's death, the fancy crossed me that poor George had gone before to announce his coming—one of the fancies that cross one's mind even when the heart is really and deeply moved—at least it is so with me.

To his Mother

July 6th.

[Year undated.]

. . . Please give him [his brother] my love and best wishes on the 14th for many most happy returns of his birthday. It was so very funny and (if I may say so) capricious of you to go and choose the great Republican festival, or birthday of the French Revolution—the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, always kept by *nous autres* as a feast-day all the world over—*la grande date*, as Victor Hugo himself once wrote after it at the top of a letter to me dated on that day—to choose it as the birthday of one of your two sons, and that one *not* me ! I really do think it very odd and hardly right. We must have changed days somehow . . .

To the same

July 14

[No year given, probably 'sixties.]

When you come here, I have got Victor Hugo's last book for you to read ; I finished it last week and —— [his father] is going to begin it. There never was such a picture of little children done in words, before ; and no one but the greatest poet of a great age could have thought of anything so beautiful as carrying the three babies who are the centre of the interest safe through all the terrors of civil war and revolution, like a line of sunlight through all the storm and shadow of the story. The heroine . . . is a lady of 18 months old at the beginning of the book, and 20 months at the end when she is left in her mother's arms safe after various adventures. There is a description of her waking at sunrise and looking at her little feet in a ray of sunlight and talking to them, which is enough to make one cry with delight.

To his eldest Sister

April 10th, '67.

Your letter, if late, was all the more welcome . . . Please thank —— [his mother] very much for her letter and reassure her concerning my

Chief* and myself; he is not at all likely to despatch me on a deadly errand to Rome or Paris, nor have we Republicans any immediate intention of laying powder-mines under Windsor Castle. . . . She will understand (to be serious) why I cannot reply to her letter. I love her and him too much to write to the one about the other when I see it is hopeless to make the one share my love for the other. I only wish that she and you and all of us could see him. I am as sure as I am of writing to you now, that you all, or anybody who was not a blockhead or a blackguard, would throw in their lots with me. I have heard since (from an ultra-Tory) two little facts which I will put in here. In '64 there was a row about Mazzini in our beautiful Parliament,—and some nameless and unnameable creature got up and abused my chief. At the end Lord Stanley got up and simply said—"Has the honourable gentleman ever *seen* M. Mazzini?" . . . Again, when Orsini had failed in bombarding M. Louis Bonaparte, and the chief was accused of taking part in the affair (1857, if you remember) and had put forth in a letter to the *Times* his denial—saying in his great way that he never did write to papers or notice accusations, but now he would for the sake of others—the *Times* next morning opened

* Mazzini.

its first leading article with a remark to the effect that the question was now set at rest, and he had nothing to do with it. "*M. Mazzini has said so ; and M. Mazzini never lied.*" Those were the words. Now please remember who *Ld. Stanley* is, and what the *Times* is. You could not find anywhere a man or a journal more averse to Mazzini's principles. I don't know when such a tribute was paid by unfriendly hands to the greatness and goodness of any man. As for me, all I say in defence of my idolatry is this : I just ask you to meet my chief. I know you too well to doubt the result—for I believe fully in the maxim of Dr. Arnold. . . . I took courage to tell the chief that it was in our sort of people that he must look for real faith and self-devotion to a cause which could do us personally no good and no harm—*not* in the Bright (Anglican-Radical) set. Don't let [my parents] have any uneasiness or vexation about me because I have at last attained the honour of meeting my chief. Even that cannot make me love him more or believe more in the Republican cause. . . .

I must stay here some time on account of my portrait, which is not yet begun, but as people say I am looking quite well again I shall *sit* at once. And I think I shall stay up for the Exhibition, &c., and then come down for a bit if you

will have me. But I hope you will all come up for the said Exhibition, early.

Last night I had to entertain a poor boy of sixteen, son of Dr. (*not* M.D.) Westland Marston, all but wholly blind, who for some time has lived (his friends tell me) on the hope of seeing me (as far as he can see). I thought it so touching, remembering my own enthusiasms at that age—that I said I should be glad to have him at my rooms (with his father and a friend or two) and they chose last night. The day before a friend brought me the most frantic set of verses written by this poor blind fellow and addressed to me. I was rather worried, but I thought of his affliction and made up my mind to read the poem and make him as happy as I could. And I think for once I have succeeded in doing another a good turn, for he certainly did enjoy the occasion. I gave him chocolate bon-bons, etc., and read to the company unpublished things of mine—among others the little old Jacobite song that you and A——liked so much when I read it you at Holmwood. It was really very touching to see the face that could just see where I was across the table looking at me—and growing so feverishly *red* that his father went over once or twice to see if he was all right. It is not because he went in for me that I cared about it, but a thing of that sort *must*

make one compassionate. . . . And he did seem to enjoy himself so much that I really felt it was worth living, to give so much pleasure to a poor boy afflicted as he is from his birth.

To the same

22A, Dorset Street,
Aug. 13.

I send you two letters from Lord Lytton about my book, which are worth many reviews. . . . The printed reviews have pitched into me so violently that the head of Moxon's firm refuses to fulfil his agreement to sell any more copies or make me any compensation. So I suppose I shall have to go elsewhere.

I am going to Lord Lytton's on Thursday (the 16th). He has written me this morning a very kind, long letter.

To the same

22A, Dorset Street,
Aug. 28.

. . . I left Underworth on Thursday after a very pleasant week. Lord Lytton was most kind and friendly, and we had long talks over all sorts of things and books and places. One day I got a letter from a clergyman expressing admiration of my last book and indignation at the attacks



MISS ALICE SWINBURNE.

made on it, and sending me a volume of his sermons in return ; rather an odd tribute, but satisfactory as showing I have not really scandalized or “horripilé” all the respectable world. We drove up to London the whole way from Knebworth (30 miles) in Ld. Lytton’s private carriage, taking luncheon ; it was a nice change from railways, and very queer entering London gradually in that way. As we drove in he told me a most exciting ghost story, whereat he is great. Another day we went to Verulam and St. Albans and over the ex-cathedral, which is superb.

To his Mother

Ap. 12th [no year].

. . . I have had so many readings, and reading to a company is just the most tiring thing I know. It leaves you next day hardly up to writing or reading either. It is *very* fascinating, and I don’t wonder it killed Dickens. The intoxicating effect of a circle of faces hanging on your words and keeping up your own excitement by theirs which is catching even when your own words on mere paper are stale to you is such that I wonder how actors stand it nightly—though after all it passes off and leaves one all right.

I have been gathering about me the circle of younger poets who are called *my* disciples “à moi” and bestowing the unpublished Bothwell upon their weak minds. They are very nice fellows and very loyal to me as their leader. There are 5 or 6 aged from 23 to 31 or so who have been presented to me at different times. I have told you of Philip Marston, the blind youth who was engaged to be married at 21 to a very beautiful girl who died before the wedding day. I am so sorry for him that his face haunts me whenever we have met,—but I am told my company is really a comfort and puts some pleasure into his life. I think it would almost make you cry—for it almost does me—to see how his sad face with great dark eyes just filmed or specked so that you would not know at first they were blind, changes and brightens sometimes when I speak or shake hands with him. One comfort is, he for one, is a poet of real genius as well as love for his art.

To the same

December 16 [no year date].

. . . Though you may not look at it with the same eyes as I do, I think you will sympathize with me—knowing what it is to me—when I tell

you that I have had a *most* kind message from Mazzini, sent from his sick-bed, only making too much of my poor attempts to serve his cause by writing. He is getting better, and I suppose may leave Switzerland for England.

To the same

September 22nd.

. . . On Sunday evening I had a long talk on European prospects with Karl Blind at his house. I am afraid the old fatal anti-German feeling in France has yet more of evil seed to bear,—and I can hardly feel as much surprise as sorrow. One only, he says, of the republican French papers has protested against it and the war which is its present fruit, the others, if they have attacked it, have not attacked it as a crime, but as a Bonapartism ! I cannot wonder that the leaders of German intellect and action should feel as it appears Bismarck does towards France as an enemy to be disabled under peril of fresh aggression : and therefore I can see no probable term at hand to ruin and bloodshed which will not be the germ and the beginning of more ruin and bloodshed. . . . I know only one German—a very able man and ardent patriot—who is utterly opposed to the seizure of Alsace and Lorraine, as worse for

Germany than even for France. I hope such opinions may soon be commoner than I fear they can now be among his countrymen. J. Faure will do what honesty and moderation can do, but no more; and just now that is not over much.

To the same

June 2nd, 1884.

. . . Last Wednesday week I had the great pleasure and honour of a visit from Saffi, to whom I presented Bertie,* having imbued his young mind with a proper sense of the distinction awaiting him. His mother and uncle were of course much pleased at the child's being presented to so illustrious a man as one of the rulers and defenders of Rome in '49. Nothing could exceed the kindness of Saffi's reception of him—and when I mentioned the fact that B. knew what an honour he was enjoying, our guest looked pleased and said—"Oh, does he know about the Roman revolution?" "I think," I replied, "you may trust *me* for that." And he certainly might. Altogether, Saffi's little visit to the country where he lived so many years in exile was very pleasant. I had gone the Monday before (this day fortnight) to meet him at a farewell luncheon given by

* A child, Mr. Watts-Dunton's nephew, and one of the household at the Pines.

some common friends of ours before his leaving England, when he was kind enough to accept my invitation to come and see me and my books. Some of the old Italian books you so kindly gave me interested him very much, with their lovely old Renaissance print and bindings. He is getting grizzled—not yet grey—but otherwise seems hardly changed at all from what he was nearer thirty than twenty years ago, when I first attended his lectures in Oxford. Watts, of course, felt the honour done us as I did, and was very much gratified to have made the acquaintance of one of the men who have made part of the history of this century a history of heroic action, devotion and suffering. . . .

To the same

March 10, '96.

I am indeed very sorry for the Italian reverses. Italy has always been next—and very near—to England in my love and loyalty, as you know. I said “we” once, speaking of Italians as opposed to their enemies, in the presence of Mazzini soon after I had been presented to him, and of course turned to him and said, “I beg your pardon—I am saying ‘we’ as if I had a right—before *you*.” And he smiled and said, “I don’t know who has

a right to call himself an Italian if *you* haven't—if you like." I couldn't speak, but I didn't cry, though I felt like it. But how splendidly the old Roman heroism has proved itself alive again in this terrible disaster ! . . .

To his youngest Sister

June 1st, 1903.

. . . Nothing indeed could surprise me to hear of A—— in the way of heroic and heavenly sweetness of nature. I have known one other human being who always seemed to me naturally (and therefore most unconsciously) above all others in perfect beauty and selfless nobility of character and temper and instinct. And that was Mazzini. Ever since I knew him I have been able to read the Gospels with such power of realizing and feeling the truth of the human character of Christ as I have never felt before.

To the same

March 27, 1903.

. . . Have you seen or heard of Signor Galimberti's magnificent compliment to me in the Italian Parliament? I ought to be writing to him if I were not writing to you.

[The following short cutting from a newspaper commemorates the occasion]:—

“ ITALIAN EULOGY ON MR. SWINBURNE.

“A telegram from Ferrara states that Signor Galimberti, the Italian Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, speaking yesterday at a solemn commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of three citizens of Ferrara, who were shot in 1853 by the Austrians on account of their Italian sentiments, expressed his feelings of warm admiration for Mr. Swinburne, quoting verses by the poet breathing a spirit of affection and reverence for Italy and glorifying the Italian Revolution. The Minister added that Italy owed a debt of gratitude to Mr. Swinburne. The enormous crowd assembled in the Tosiborghi Theatre, where the commemoration took place, loudly cheered the Minister's reference to the British poet.”

To his Mother

Arts Club, Hanover Sq.,
Sunday, March 31st.*

I must write again to tell you what has happened to me. All last evening and late into the night

* Many of these most interesting letters are undated, beyond the month, and have no envelope or postmark. This

I was with Mazzini. They say a man's highest hopes are usually disappointed : mine were not. I had never dared to dream of such a reception as he gave me. At his desire, I read him my verses on Italy straight through ; of course I felt awfully shy and nervous when I came to the part about him personally, but when I looked up at him I saw such a look on his face as set me all right again at once. If you had ever seen him, I am sure you would love him as I do. I had heard he was growing rather frail and weak with years and troubles. But he was as bright and fresh and energetic as a man could be. I am not going to try and tell you what he did me the honour to say about my poetry and the use of my devotion and belief to his cause. He says there is too much of *him* in my poem on Italy. I wanted to know how one could have done it otherwise. He has asked me to go and see him whenever I like. The minute he came into the room, which was full of people, he walked straight up to me (who was standing in my place and feeling as if I trembled all over) and said, " I know *you*," and I did as I always thought I should and really meant not to do if I could help—went down on my knees and kissed his hand. He held mine between his for some time while I

one would appear to be about the same period as that of April, '67.

was reading, and now and then gave it a great pressure. He says he will take me to Rome when the revolution comes, and crown me with his own hands in the Capitol. He is as ready to go in for a little joke such as this or bit of fun, and talk about anything that may turn up, as if he was nobody. He is a born king and chief and leader of men. You never saw such a beautiful smile as his. He is not the least bit discouraged or disheartened—and I don't know how any one could be who had ever seen his face. It is literally full of light ; he has the largest and brightest dark eyes in the world. He is clearly the man to create a nation—to bid the dead bones live and rise. And he is as simple and gentle and pleasant—with the most exquisite refinement of manner—as any one could be. In cast of feature he is a little like my uncle Ashburnham, on a smaller scale of size, with twice the life and expression. I know, now I have seen him, what I guessed before, why, whenever he has said to any one, " Go and be killed because I tell you," they have gone and been killed because he told them. Who wouldn't, I should like to know? I never answered his letter, but last night I told him that on receiving it I felt there was but one person on earth to turn to and tell of this great honour and delight, and that of course was my mother. I think it pleased

him. I know he was very fond of his. But though she had a greater and better son, I don't think she had one more fond of her. . . .

. . . Please give him [his father] for Tuesday my best love and many happy returns of the day. *My** birthday I mean to consecrate by going to the Chief. I must stay up a little because of my portraits, or else I should have run down already. Powell is in town, and full of Mme. Schumann's concerts. I hope to be able to go with him and hear her. He has bestowed on me a superb photographic album, which was a most acceptable present, as I wanted one to put you all into.

Ever your most affec. son.

To the same

Arts Club, Hanover Square,
May 7th.

[No year given, but by address and handwriting evidently near the period of the first letter about Mazzini, or beginning of 'seventies.]

. . . As to my chief, if you are really anxious about his influence upon me, you may be quite at rest. I do not expect you to regard him with my eyes, but you must take my word for it that nothing but good can come from the great honour

* His father's birthday was four days before his own.

and delight of being admitted to see and talk with him. He is always immensely kind and good to me, but all he wants is that I should dedicate and consecrate my writing power to do good and serve others exclusively ; which I can't. If I tried I should lose my faculty of verse even. When I can, I do ; witness my last book, which I hope you have received at last. . . .

You must all come up for the picture exhibitions of the year, which are excellent, as if to make up for last year's failures. There is no *very* great picture in the Academy, but quite an unusual show of good ones, in my humble opinion. Tell M. to go and look at a small boy by Millais, whose (the child's, *not* the painter's) father I know very well ; I think it will gratify her. It is seriously a lovely bit of painting, and of a really pretty child ; a better picture than his more ambitious ones, which disappointed me. Old Landseer's white bulls are perfectly magnificent, both beasts and painting. There are very few good landscapes, but two or three really good seascapes—one by Hook, a boat rowed by boys on the edge of a full rising wave, curving into a solid mound of water before it breaks ; both the faces (the elder half-laughing, the younger boy grave and girding himself up for the pull) and the water, are quite right. It made me thirsty to be in between

the waves. Whistler, who doesn't like Hook's pictures as a rule, pointed it out to me as good. . . .

To the same

22A, Dorset Street,
Oct. 1.

I scrawl you in haste just a line to say I keep quite well and to thank you for the most welcome letter just forwarded enclosing a note from Gaëta with good news of Mazzini, whom Mme. Venturi has succeeded in rejoining after a journey impeded as you may suppose by various delays and difficulties. Her company and care will I know be more to him than anything. "He is well," she tells me, "in health and beloved (of course) by all who go near him." This last has always been the case. I only hope the health may prove as certain and durable. You can guess what a comfort the note is to me. Now I must write to another friend of his whom the news may not yet have reached and who has suffered great anxiety and sorrow since his imprisonment, and deserves to share the relief as soon as possible. . . .

I hope you got three copies of my Ode all right as sent. I am only too glad you should like a poem of mine well enough to care to have them. . . .

It has been (with its author) violently attacked

and ridiculed in the *Saturday Review*. This, of course, I expected, and was only too much flattered at so small a pamphlet being at once thought worth so long and full a notice as two close columns and more of abuse, political and other.

To the same

[Undated.]

It has been one thing after another in the way of engagements that has kept me back—but nothing in the way of illness. Only you can't think how I get flooded with letters and invitations and that sort of thing (and some from people who are real friends to me) that I don't like to leave town without answering either by a call or by a note. You must take my word for it when I say I'll come down the very first day I can—even if only for a day or two before you start north. What kept me from coming to Holmwood a week since was really serious—the offer of a seat in Parliament next session if I would only allow my name to be put up. Of course I felt myself flattered, but at first objected on the grounds that I was not fit or properly trained, and might be taking a better man's place—but most of my friends have been day after day urging and pressing me to accept. Still I don't think it is my line. But you will understand this

has detained me and given me a great deal to think about. . . . Of course this business is rather *upsetting* altogether. I know I don't want the "honour"—but a friend said to me the other day, "If you believe what you say and write you ought to sacrifice your time and comfort to your country." But I don't think I will—in that way. . . .

To the same

12, North Crescent,
March 12th.

. . . You will see by to-day's papers that I have lost the man whom I most loved and honoured of all men on earth. I am not in the humour to write about it, or to think just yet more than I can help : and in your time of mourning I do not want to intrude upon you my other personal cause of sorrow. But of course you and my father will know that it is a great loss to me as it is to the world which was not worthy of the great and good man now removed from it. However, there is left to us who knew him his beloved memory, and the recollection which we shall carry with us till we die that we were honoured by his friendship. All who knew him, high or low, loved him with all their heart ; and he

returned their affection—never forgetting or overlooking any one—ever taking thought for all others—as devoted, tender, and unselfish in the details of his life as in its great things ; but indeed it always seemed to me that he made all things great that touched him by the greatness of his own nature. . . .

To the same

June 22nd, 1882.

. . . I thought I might as well spend five minutes and a penny on sending you a newspaper article which I have just read with interest—as I always do anything which concerns Cardinal Newman, whose genius and character I admire as much as I detest the creed to which he has (in his own phrase) “assented” by becoming a Papist. . . . I converted Watts (who did not know his verses in the *Lyra Apostolica*) to enthusiastic belief in the Cardinal as a poet, not long since, by repeating a stanza or two from memory. It is delicious to *me* (selfishly—because of my own failures in examination) to find that *the* Newman did not shine in the class-list, and that his immeasurably inferior brother did. Jowett once described Professor F. Newman to me, in his most incisive and thinnest voice, as “a good man—who is always in the wrong.”

I would not say *always*—but certainly I don't think he is a man of whose intellectual sympathy those who (in some things) think with him need be proud. . . .

To his eldest Sister

Aug. 13, '90.

. . . Have you seen Hy. Furniss's caricature of me in this morning's *Punch*, tearing out my last few hairs in agony at finding that no member of the Tory Government had read or heard of my poem? I think it a capital caricature—and Walter and I have laughed over it all the more heartily for remembering how very imaginative an idea it is that I should have expected these worthy and useful and serviceable Tories to read or understand mine or any one's verses.

. . . When I began this letter I meant to write about what I have naturally been thinking of a good deal since yesterday morning—the death of Cardinal Newman. For many years he has been an interesting study to me—ever since, at the earnest entreaty of a worthy Roman Catholic friend whom I have long since lost sight of, I read, learnt, marked, and inwardly digested, his wonderful book, "The Grammar of Assent" (*I* should call it "The Accidence of

Atheism ")—[so] that his death revives the sense of wonder and curiosity which I felt on reading a religious book full of beautiful, earnest, noble feeling, as well as exquisite writing and subtle reasoning, which proves that the writer had forgotten—or, I rather incline to think, can never have known—the meaning of the word “belief.” Page after page I read, and thought “Why, he’s giving up everything—how on earth is he ever going to make out that it’s right—or possible—to believe in anything—in God, in the soul, in a future life, or any conceivable object of belief? And he doesn’t. He thinks you had better “assent”—accept anything—“open your mouth and shut your eyes,” as children say—and make up your mind that you won’t disbelieve it! I said—if I rightly remember—to the man who had begged me to read the book, that I never before understood the meaning of the word “infidel,” and never could have imagined any intelligent creature existing in such a state of utter unbelief. I *should* like to hear what St. Paul would have said to a professing convert who “assented” after such a fashion! Of course one cannot but think what others would have thought of it—St. John and St. James; and above all, what their Master while on earth would have said to such a disciple.

And the curious thing is that it is impossible to read this amazing book without being impressed by the perfect sincerity, the single-minded purity of purpose, the earnest simplicity and devotion, which impelled the author to write a book so much more than atheistic that one wants an extra—or ultra—epithet to define the tendency of its teaching. Perhaps the old Puritan term “nullifidian” (believer in *nothing*) would be the most accurate and appropriate.

I hope I have not bored you by all this improvisation about the man whom all the papers are writing about, and who at all events *must* live as a poet by grace of two splendid little poems in the *Lyra Apostolica* (which you—and *others*—gave me so many years ago).

I am very hard at work reviewing Victor Hugo's new posthumous book—“*En Voyage*”—which I think you would like to read ; especially the letters written while travelling among the Pyrenees (Cauterets, etc.). . . .

To his Mother

4, Grafton Street,
Mar. 13 [1862].

I am sure you will understand how that which has happened since I last wrote to you has upset

my plans and how my time has been taken up. Till last week when I was laid up with a bad turn of influenza I have been almost always with Rossetti. For the last few days I have been with a friend in the country and am nearly quite right again.

I would rather not write yet about what has happened—I suppose none of the papers gave a full report, so that you do not know that I was almost the last person who saw her (except her husband and a servant) and had to give evidence at the inquest. Happily there was no difficulty in proving that illness had quite deranged her mind, so that the worst chance of all was escaped. . . . I am only glad to have been able to keep him company and be of a little use during these weeks.

Rossetti and I are going to live together as soon as we move—of course he could not stay in the old house, and asked me to come with him. Luckily I had put off deciding on a lodging as it would have been a great plague to change again. In the autumn we get into a house at Chelsea—in Cheyne Walk, facing the trees and river—with an old garden. The house is taken (like every other nice one) for the Exhibition season, so we must make shift somewhere till then . . .

To the same

12, North Crescent,
Jan. 22.

I forgot to give you Rossetti's message of thanks for the Photo of me ; he was very pleased at your thinking of him to send it to ; but he and my friends generally do not think it at all a good likeness of me—they say the downlooking pose is so entirely unlike and uncharacteristic of me. I said you thought the reverse, but R. maintains that my natural action (not of course when reading, but when talking, etc.) is to hold my head well up, and not down.

To the same

The Pines, Putney Hill,
Dec. 29th, 1894.

. . . Christina Rossetti died this morning and he [Watts-Dunton] has to write an obituary notice of her. I shall always greatly regret that my earnest wish and hope to have the great privilege and pleasure of making you all personally acquainted with her should have been frustrated. Apart from her exquisite genius as a poet, and the sympathy in religious views which made her say to me once how she should like to know you all from that ground (as she did, I understood,

some friends and acquaintances of yours) she was one of the most naturally attractive and delightful people I ever met. You must, I think, have liked her for herself, even if you had nothing in common with her. There was a mixture of frankness and gentleness in her manner—straight-forward without brusquerie, and reserved without gaucherie—which was natural and peculiar to her. You will be almost as glad as I was to know that her good brother—the support and mainstay of his family for so many years—was daily with her till the end. . . .

To the same

Jan. 1st, 1895.

. . . This is merely a postscript enclosing a couple of newspaper cuttings about dear Miss Rossetti which I thought some or all might care to see. The last words I wrote last night and last year before going up to bed at midnight were some lines in memory of her, which Walter liked much. The little elegy is not finished or filled up, but perhaps you may care to read the opening and closing lines. . . . I looked out of window just before beginning to write, and have never seen a more magnificent heavenful of stars. . . .

To the same

Hotel de France, Vichy,
Aug. 13th, '69.

I must say I *do* wish your doctor had sent you here . . . and not only we should have met *prematurely*, but I should have had the delight of introducing to you and to [his father] my dear friend Burton. It *is* this that I most want to make you understand—I have written to A. about the volcano and cathedrals—but if you had seen *him*, when the heat and the climb and the *bothers* of travelling were too much for me—in the *very* hot weather—nursing, helping, waiting on me—going out to get me books to read in bed—and always thoughtful, kind, ready, and so bright and fresh that nothing but a lizard (I suppose that is the most insensible thing going) could have resisted the influence—I feel sure you *would* like him (you remember you said you didn't) and then, love him, as I do : I have been now nearly a month alone with him—and I tell you this, he is so good, so true, kind, noble, and brave, that I never expect to see his like again—but *him* I do hope to see again, *and* when time comes to see him at Damascus as H.B.M. Consul. “What a lift in life [as I told him] for a low-minded and benighted Republican !” . . . We

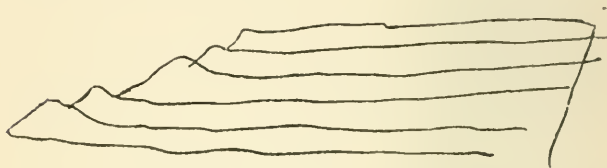
have met here (*i.e.* she saw my name down among the visitors and hunted *me* up) the author of the "Week in a French Country House," and tho' I do *not* like being hunted, I found it was worth while playing the pretty to the old lady, as she plays and sings to me in private by the hour, and her touch and her voice are like a young woman's. *But*—they have sent her here to get down her *fat*—and—— !

To the same

Hotel Castiglione, Paris,
Aug. 31st [year evidently same as foregoing].

Since I last wrote to A. on the eve of our leaving Vichy we have done our tour in Auvergne—and I only wish (and wished) that you all could have been of the party. [His father] I think would have especially enjoyed the exploration we made of the rock country and its formation of basalt. *I* never saw anything of the sort so grand ; and the only one of the party who had seen Staffa said that it was on a much lesser and slighter scale than this. There is between Le Puy and Polignac one great cliff front of towering columns which faces the valley of the Borne river—columns broken off at a great height, and as regular as if designed for

a cathedral: then a lower, more abrupt and irregular range; and then, further west, and covering a whole hillside, an immense heap of the same basaltic columns crushed sideways and slanting out of the accumulated weight and increasing pressure of the growing mountain thrown up above it. Then bowed and broken pillars lying like this



only still and much more irregularly, which makes me sure that even I can draw the lines so as to show what sort of shape they have taken—look, as Burton said, “like a bundle of petrified faggots under some giant’s arm”—forming a whole mountain-side. I wanted to climb them and get over the crest of the hill, but Burton dissuaded me, though I am sure I could—but as I had done three pretty good climbs the same morning, I consented to *not*. I send what survives after the journey to Paris of some flowers I gathered at the foot of the highest cliff and others from the ruin of the Château de Polignac . . . but I am afraid the best flowers are lost or spoilt.

I *did* gather, and lay by for sending, some pretty specimens of bell-shaped flowers which were new to me, but they must have come to grief by the way. Don't believe one word that the wretch Murray says about the cathedral of Le Puy ; it is one of the grandest as well as one of the strangest churches ever built, and adapted with almost a miraculous instinct of art to the tone of the landscape and character of the country about, where, except the deep fields and lawns of grass that spread about and slope up from the narrow valleys made by the two streams Borne and Loire, there is nothing but alternately brown and grey mountain-land ending in a long and beautifully undulating circle of various heights and ranges. These mountain colours are most delicately repeated in the alternate stripes of the cathedral front ; the effect, like that of the whole town, reminded me as well as Burton (who spent 18 months there as a boy) of my beloved Siena. Indeed Le Puy is a smaller Siena—the highest praise *I* can give.

I am only here for a day or two, and intend to go on first (perhaps) to Etretât and then Guernsey and then to England. . . .

To the same

Arts Club, Hanover Square,
October 24th.

I was very glad to find your letter waiting for me—but you might quite as well have sent me a line to Etretât, for in a little bit of a place like that one is known in a day or two. I had a real sea adventure there which I will tell you about when we meet. I had to swim (Powell says) over two miles out to sea and was picked up by a fishing boat ; but luckily I was all right though very tired, and the result was I made immense friends with all the fishermen and sailors about—who are quite the nicest people I ever knew. . . .

To the same

The Pines, Putney Hill.
Aug. 12th, 1885.

I must write a word of thanks for your letter at once. . . . You ought not to fly in the face of the fact by decrying your own powers as a correspondent. It is not filial vanity or pride in my mother that makes me think so ; Watts, who has a vast correspondence, always says he knows no letters more delightful than yours. You could not write a dull one if you tried—

which well you ought to know it. . . . Only as you say that letter-writing is one of the two things you feel most tiring afterwards, I would not for *any* number of worlds have you exhaust or hurt yourself in the least by writing to the likes of me except when quite "so disposed" in the body as well as in the mind. . . . Aug. 13th. I could not finish this last night, and to-day has been taken up by a visit from Captain and Mrs. Burton, both looking rather younger than ever—friendlier and pleasanter they could neither look nor be. She said at parting she had not had such a pleasant afternoon for years. I showed them the priceless blackletter book of animals which I owe to your generosity, and they were *most* worthy of it. Burton admitted that in none of his travels had he met with *some* of those darling beasts with human faces and birds that tie their necks in knots. But as for the infidelity that would question their existence, he could only regard it as equally sinful and stupid. And—on a more serious subject, he was talking about General Gordon (an old friend and fellow soldier of his), and saying what a much abler man he was than the people who have been scribbling about him since his death, have made him out to be. . . .

To the same

3, Great James Street,
Oct. 22nd.

. . . I quite agree with what you say about J. Morley's article on Bothwell and its superiority to Ld. Houghton's for instance—but then one must remember that he is a man of very much deeper and more solid intellectual power than Ld. H. who, I must say, was better than I expected. But I *quite* agree with you and not J. M. about the character of Darnley. I can't tell you how glad I was the night I went to bed after finishing the scene of his murder, to think that I should have no more to do with him! And—what Morley does not seem to see, clever as he is, and you do see by instinct, as I did when I was writing the book—there is quite as much of the poor wretch as could possibly be endured—and I was, as you say, “only too thankful to be rid of him.”

I have done at last with old Chapman, and got most of my proofs. At the last minute there turned up an unknown poem of some length, and of great difficulty to construe, on the death of the Lord Russell of the day, which by favour of Jowett's friend the Duke of Bedford was allowed to be copied for this edition of Chapman, and I had to read and review it, adding a

paragraph to the Essay which I fondly thought was completed. . . . As soon as I have a copy printed separately (it is going to be issued in this double form, in small type as a preface to Chapman's Poems, and in a handsomer form as a separate independent work of mine) I will send you a copy.

Now I come to what I was going to begin writing about, only I thought if I did I should end without saying anything else I had to say. You may have noticed a fortnight since (on Sunday) the announcement in the papers of the death of poor old Mr. Procter (“ Barry Cornwall ”), the last left of the poets of the beginning of the century—and I dare say you remember the letter from his wife that I showed you, in answer to my “ presentation ” of a copy of “ Bothwell,” and I remember you thought it very nice and touching. I thought you might like to see the correspondence I have had during the last ten days with the poor old lady. It began, as you will see, by her asking if she might publish some complimentary verses I once (six years ago) addressed to her husband, with the note which accompanied them. Both note and verses were scribbled off on the spur of the moment and never meant for publication, but of course on getting the first of the three notes I enclose I wrote at once to tell Mrs. Procter to make any use she

pleased of them—and I also sat up that night (as I am sitting up now to write this, for if I write letters in the morning it cuts up all my day and I do no other work—so I always put off my correspondence till 10 p.m.) writing a little “epicede” or funeral song for the deceased—because I thought if any verses of mine addressed to him were to be printed directly after his death, there ought to be some rather better and more appropriate than those old ones. The new ones you will find in the *Fortnightly* for next month, as I have this morning got a note from Morley to say “they are most welcome as all your work is” (they came so late in the month that I thought they might be *too* late, and then I should have sent them to the *Athenæum*), and he adds, in answer to a word of acknowledgment from me of his Macmillan article—“The shabby and beggarly scrap on your great tragedy deserves no thanks from you ; it is a poor performance—but I was stringently limited for space”: which is so far satisfactory to me that I see he really had not time and room to do what I thought I should have done in his place—enlarge rather on the last two acts (where the whole heroism of the Queen’s character comes out) than on the first two only, as he has done. I hope you will not be tired of deciphering this midnight scrawl.

To the same

3, Great James Street,
Nov. 2nd.

I am now writing, not at night, but just before going out to dine and spend the evening. Yesterday I was again at Mrs. Procter's, as she had asked me to give her a visit every Sunday I could, and the last (but yesterday) I did not go. They are packing up to remove from the house they had the lease of, so I don't know if I shall see them again before they leave ; but we had some very pleasant and interesting talk. Mrs. P. is a link with such far-off famous men and times that she has got a letter from Burns addressed to her mother, and (what is even more interesting to me—and that is saying a *great* deal) remembers a Mr. Sharpe the engraver bringing to the house, when she was yet a young unmarried lady, *the* man of all others who were alive in any part of this century (except, perhaps, Shelley) that I should most have liked to see and speak to in person—Blake.

I dare say you will have seen the *Fortnightly* before this reaches you. My verses also appeared in the *Academy* (I suppose through Mrs. P. or Morley—at least with the latter's leave) but misdated and misprinted. Mrs. P. and her remaining daughter think of travelling for a little before

settling down in their new home—which I think is a natural feeling—and were consulting me about localities—and did I think *Cannes* or *Mentone* would be nice? (*did* I!) Whereupon I lifted up my voice and gave them such a screed of eloquence on the subject of that part of the world and its detestability as amazed but (I think) convinced their weak minds. Then I told them that as far as I knew the two most perfect places to go to were Tuscany and the Pyrenees, Pau and Caunterets, or Pisa and Siena and San Giminiano: Florence being too full and fashionable (I should suppose) for people who, knowing quantities of English acquaintance, would not be going abroad to look for *society*.

I don't know whether you will care (I was really very glad) to hear what I heard from an old friend of mine, Mr. Lorimer Graham, our American Consul at Florence, that poor old Kirkup has at last, instead of getting *quite* cracked before he died, (as I fully expected some day to hear) been converted from his spirit-rapping nonsense, and given up "spiritualism" (as those vulgarest of materialists have the impudence to call their nonsense and imposture). I always thought that he, who had been the friend of Landor and Browning and Trelawney (to whom he sent me a letter of introduction) and is, I

believe, a man of really great learning in all old historic Italian matters, was fit for something better than the part of a dupe to such disgusting impostures as he has now been awakened from belief in, though I fear through a very painful process of detection of prolonged and elaborate deceit and cruel villainy in those nearest to him in every sense. . . .

I have felt very deeply of late the truth of what you say, that there is no pleasure derived from personal success or triumph comparable for an instant to that which comes from the sense of being able to give any comfort or support to others : but this is no new doctrine or feeling to me ; I have always felt and believed it ; and I don't think that for the fame of the greatest man of an age I would exchange one pressure of Mazzini's hand that I have had in answer to my poor words—impotent and feeble but sincere and true as words can be that come from the very heart—in praise and hopeful prophecy of his country and his cause.

To the same

3, Gt. Jas. St.,
Nov. 15th.

I called this afternoon, thro' fog and rain, on dear old Mrs. P., and she told me she appreciated

them (the verses) so much more in print ; I told her I never could appreciate a poem in MS. myself. She also told me to-day what I did not know—it may interest A—— that she met Keats several times, and though she had no conversation with the young man (who I suppose had not then written *the* poems that make one cherish his name) was greatly struck by his beauty—which I should hardly have expected from the engraving.

Perhaps you may have seen in the papers how terrible a loss has befallen my poor friend Madox Brown in the death of his only son, not yet 20, and a boy of the most wonderful promise both in painting and authorship ; and a nice unaffected amiable young fellow besides, who was already quite a companion for his poor father, and able last winter when he was laid up with a bad attack of gout to help him by finishing a great picture which otherwise could not have been done in proper time. . . . It is as grievous a thing as I can remember to have seen.

To the same

The Pines, Putney Hill,
May 3rd, 1883.

From the Gaskells we went on to call on Mrs. Procter—who being a year or so further from

eighty, and nearer ninety than when we last met, was naturally rather more bright, active, witty and amusing than before. I begin to believe that old body is immortal. There is not an atom of show or pretence about her; she walks like a girl (her own grand-daughter, if she had one), has the eyes of a hawk, and I wish I had half her hearing. She . . . talks of Charles Lamb and his sister, Coleridge and Wordsworth, till one feels as if one might and ought to call on them, or at least leave cards for them on the next landing. Keats and Shelley seem too young for her to have known—and when one remembers that Byron was her husband's schoolfellow and knew him at Harrow, one feels inclined to say, "Dear me, I didn't think Lord B. was so young a man (or would be if he were alive)."

To the same

The Pines,
Sept. 1st, 1888.

I must apologise for being ten days late in answering your last letter, but I have been rather busy of late. I *should* have liked to be with you when the heather was coming into flower. . . .

I am very proud and very glad that — has read my "Armada" and likes it so well. I tried

to get in as much as I could about "our part in the destruction" (as you say) and I thought I had done fair justice to the English fighters and their splendid work in the middle part of the poem: but if I have made too much of the sea and too little of the seamen, I am sure you will agree that Watts's noble "Ballad of the Armada" in the *Athenæum* has made ample amends for my shortcomings. He tells me that soldiers and sailors are particularly delighted with it, and it is all the talk of the United Service or naval and military clubs: and I don't wonder. It is a masterpiece of poetical narrative. May I say one word on another subject which you mention, and ask you not to "think me horrid"? (How could I ever think *you* anything but too kind and good and dear in *any* comment or remark you might make on my writings?) I do not think that the monstrous doctrines of Popery *can* be described as "religious errors." A creed which makes it a duty to murder innocent men, women, and children by tortures which I am sure you could not bear to read of is not an "error"—it is the worship of the principle of evil—or in other words, the setting up of the devil in place of God. One of their tenets was (and therefore I suppose is—as it was a Papal "edict") that a son who knew or suspected that his father or his mother held

unorthodox opinions would certainly be condemned to eternal punishment if he did not betray his parent to the Inquisition—not merely to death (and that would be *rather* monstrous, one would say) but to torture that modern men can scarcely endure to read of. Now, there is nothing in the record of heathen cruelty or persecution like that. Nero himself was a baby—a blessed innocent—compared to the Fathers of the Inquisition. And to call those people Christians seems to me a more horrible insult to the divine name of Christ than ever was offered by the Jews who murdered Him. If we are to believe anything recorded in the Gospels we *must* believe—we cannot help seeing—that Christ would have said to them what He said to the Pharisees (who after all were not such monsters as these), “Ye are of your father the Devil.”

I trust I have not worried you with this explanation of the passages in my poem which seem to have displeased you—or made you wish there had been less of them; but of course I always want if possible to explain and justify myself to you. You know—and if you did not I certainly could not find words to tell you—how much I value your opinion and treasure any expression of your sympathy. . . .

To the same

The Pines,
Sept. 10th, 1888.

I cannot find words to thank you for your last. . . . It gave me the deepest comfort and happiness to be assured that you agree with me that "the wicked"—and also, I should add, those who play tricks with their conscience and sophisticate their understanding into belief or acceptance of what is incredible and wicked—"do make a God of the father of lies." That is exactly what I meant to say—and what I always did mean to say—in every line I have written on the subject.

It is only less gratifying to be told that you like my Armada better "every time you read it"—which is *the* greatest compliment that can be paid to any work.

I send you the proof of my poem on the young person * about whom I wrote in my last letter. . . . But I should warn you that . . . it is not worthy of the subject; and that—as stated in the 5th stanza—the one man who could have written a poem worthy of the subject was Victor Hugo. That great and good man did so delight in children that he must be inconceivably happy now I often think—"for of such is the kingdom

* Olive, niece of Mr. Watts-Dunton.

of heaven." If that divinest of words is true, I get a glimpse of that kingdom whenever I walk into Wimbledon.

To the same

March 10th, 1881.

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I quite understand how (as you say) "a mother loves those words" which warn us against offending one of the little ones—but to me the divinest of all divine words and thoughts—is that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." I am very sure it is so here on earth—where nothing—except age in its brightest beauty of goodness and sweetness and kindness—is so adorable as a little child is. At the same time—to be practical and candid—I must admit that it is a noisy quarter of Paradise which is occasionally occupied when I am (so to speak) admitted to it by my little Bertie. If you could but have seen him the last two days that I have been reading and explaining Shakespeare to him—that is, since he has been introduced to Falstaff! Both his father and mother tell me he talks of nothing else—literally both day and night. . . . Again and again during my half-reading half-relating the main part of the great comic scenes, the child went over on the small (the very small!)

of his little back among the sofa cushions, crowing aloud like a baby, choking with laughter, shouting and rolling from side to side with his heels *any* height above his head and kicking with absolute fury of delight. "Oh! didn't he tell stories!" he said to his father (in the largest type of a child's voice). I thought, if Shakespeare could have been looking down and enjoying the little thing's inexpressible rapture, he must have felt it a greater tribute than all the plaudits of all the theatres in the world.

To the same

The Pines,
March 14th, 1888.

. . . Many thanks for your kind words of sympathy about the loss of my dear old friend Mrs. Procter. She certainly was the brightest old body that ever laughed off her years—the most brilliantly witty woman I ever met. Many people were terribly afraid of her tongue—which certainly could say very sharp things in a very telling and memorable way: but to me she was always more than kind. . . .

I am very glad you saw the statue tho' not the tomb of my beloved friend and leader—I may call him so as he was good enough to reckon

me among his friends and disciples. I wish you had seen him living. His face was indeed "as it had been the face of an angel."

To the same

The Pines,
Feb. 24, '87.

. . . And now I come to the subject which has been almost the only thing I have been able to think of for five minutes together for the last ten days. You will have seen in the *Athenæum*—if not before—the announcement of the death of my beloved friend Philip Marston; his poor father sent me a note announcing it on the very day that he—as I do hope and trust and believe—passed from a life of such suffering and sorrow as very few can have known to a happy one. I am sure you will be as glad (or almost as glad) as I am to remember your kindness in helping me, and his good friend (unknown to me otherwise) Mrs. Craik, to provide against risk of want for him. I don't know whether I ought to wish that you had known him, because if you had you could not help any more than we can being very unhappy at the sense of his loss. But of course I do feel it would have been most cruel and selfish

and wicked even to wish that his life should have been prolonged—tho' nobody quite knows (not even Watts, I think) what a pleasure it was to me to have him here and talk to him and read to him and see his poor blind eyes become so expressive of pleasure and emotion that nothing but the vague direction of their look reminded one that they could see nothing. And I did so want to get him nearer, so that I might have seen him oftener and spent more time in reading to him. It was so beautiful and interesting to see how he enjoyed being read to. And his affection and gratitude for such very very little kindness as one could show him would explain—if you had seen us together—why I have been so much more unhappy than I ought to have been at the news of his release; even though his sorrows were such as to make one half inclined to believe in the terrible old superstition of an evil star. Think of a child born with a beautiful gift of poetry, and a most affectionate nature, and the most beautiful face *I* ever saw in a man—Watts was saying the other day, “Though Philip was the handsomest man I ever saw, one never thought of calling him handsome,” and I said, “No, he was too *beautiful*”—and so he was; not the least effeminate, but in feature and expression far above such a word as “handsome”—and then

think of this child struck blind in infancy—and when he grew up being engaged to a beautiful young lady who loved him as he deserved to be loved, and died suddenly just before the time appointed for their marriage—and then finding such comfort as he could in the affection of a sister who was devoted to him and travelled with him abroad and was (one could see) as nice as darling A. could have been to me under the circumstances—and then losing her too ! When I heard of that (I mean of Miss Eleanor Marston's death) I felt almost horrified at such an accumulation of miseries on one poor fellow's head—and that one so humble and loveable and patient and bright and brave. I *can't* help wishing (in spite of what I said before) that you had known him. Everybody who did, I am quite sure, loved him. . . .

. . . I have tried to put a little bit of my affection and sorrow into some poems which are going to appear directly with a memorial article by Watts (enlarged from his notice in the *Athenæum* of Philip's death—I was actually going to write "poor Philip's death"—but, thank God, it isn't "poor" Philip any more now).

To the same

The Pines, Putney Hill,
Oct. 7th, 1896.

Thanks for your kind words of sympathy with Walter and me in our sorrow for the great loss we have just undergone of one of the best friends we ever had, and one of the best men that ever lived [W. Morris]—simple as a child and unselfish as few children are, brave and kind and true and loyal as any one of his own Icelandic heroes or mediæval knights. As Walter has been saying to me this evening, it is unlike any other loss—it is like the loss of a noble and glorious child whose quaint charm of character made us half forget the unique genius of the poet and the extraordinary energy of the man. My friendship with him began in '57—think of that!—and was never broken or ruffled for a moment; tho' for many years we have hardly ever met, it was none the less cordial and true. I felt stunned all the day after his death. It seemed incredible. Walter says he felt just the same. . . .

To his eldest Sister

The Pines,
June 22, '98.

The shock of so great and so utterly unexpected a sorrow as the sudden loss of a beloved friend of

more than forty years' standing made it all but impossible for me to write till now to anybody, except one line of acknowledgment to dear Ned's daughter for the note written at her mother's desire to let me know of our common bereavement. I literally could not realize or even understand it till Walter explained the truth to me, and I saw the memorial article in the *Times* of that morning (Saturday last—I feel as if it was months ago instead of four days since ; dark and heavy days they have been to me).

I am very glad you sent a wreath, and thank you for the honour done to my verses. I hope and think they *were* rather appropriate. . . .

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,
June 30, '98.

I am getting over the shock though not the sorrow of my great loss—at least I begin to realize it, and no longer find myself thinking of Ned as alive—or rather feeling half a dozen times in the day for a second (less long than a flash of lightning lasts) as if he were, and we were sure to meet soon and show each other things and enjoy the exchange of talk and fun. I have a volume of poems ready for the press inscribed to

his memory and Morris's in a poem of the same metre and length as the two former poems of dedication addressed to each of them respectively in '65 and '93. It was something of a relief to write this third dedication, and something of a comfort to find how highly W. thinks of it. . . .

To his Mother

The Pines,
Nov. 13th, 1892.

I have written some verses on Tennyson's beautiful and enviable death in the arms of Shakespeare, as one may say, reading *my* favourite poem of all just before the end. . . . They are in the same metre as those I wrote last year on his birthday, with which he was (as he wrote) so much pleased—and the two poems are just of the same length.

To his eldest Sister

The Pines,
July 20, '98.

Perhaps you may know that I have lost another dear and honoured friend in Mrs. Lynn Linton. It was a great shock and grief to me to see her death announced in the newspapers—I did not

even know that she had been ill. She was not only one of the most brilliant and gifted, but one of the kindest and most generous of women. She *would* give me some priceless manuscript relics of Landor—her spiritual father, whose best and truest friend she was. I never knew any one more nobly upright and unselfish and loyal and true. No one ever will.

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,

Sept. 26 [no year given]:

I ought to have answered your letter of the 6th before I received your letter of the 23rd, but I am so dazed with proofs of the huge fourth volume of my "Poems," that I can hardly feel as if I had either eyes or brains left.

I am very truly glad that you like the lines on the death of my dear and honoured friend, Mrs. Lynn Linton, so much. Your description of the sea and rocks and sands made me quite hungry and envious. Mr. Woodford (in the long pre-episcopal days when I was his private pupil—you remember him at East Dene ?) used often to talk of Lundy Island. He had been tutor (before my time) to the two sons of its owner—whose extraordinary name was Heaven. "Walter Heaven" had

evidently been a favourite pupil! Did you see in the *Times Supplement* a notice of the memoir of my other episcopal "coach," the future Bishop of Oxford, and the very pleasant and grateful mention of his unworthy pupil? . . .

I thought you might like the cutting I send from the *Daily Graphic* about the return of the *Discovery*, but I daresay you have seen it. What a magnificent business it has been! I know how you must have gloated and thrilled over it.

To his Mother

The Pines,
Feb. 24th 1896.

We have both been feeling very sorry for the loss of poor Leighton. There never was a man for whom—even on a comparatively slight acquaintance—one's regard came so near affection. To know him was to like him, and to like him was almost to love him. . . .

To his eldest Sister

The Pines,
June 17, '88.

. . . I hope the place continues to suit you; how long have you taken it for? It is very good

of you to have chosen me a room, and it will be a great pleasure to come and occupy it. I shall always remember Leigh House with great affection and regret. I always liked it, but last summer I enjoyed the neighbourhood and my favourite walks so thoroughly that liking had passed into something like real love, such as I have hardly felt for any place since we left East Dene. . . .

I am very sorry the poor Emperor of Germany is dead, he seems to have been so really lovable a man : but I hope his son's hatred of his mother's country is exaggerated by report.

.

To his Mother

The Pines,
Christmas Day, 1888.

.

I have just sent to the *Athenæum* a poem (which Watts likes so much that I venture to hope you may like it) in memory of my late dear friend J. W. Inchbold—whose guest I was for three months or so in Cornwall in the summer and autumn of 1864—and under whose (temporary) roof I wrote much of the above-mentioned *Atalanta*. I wish you had known him—he was a very religious man and a strong Churchman,

but most charitable and liberal-minded (as you may infer from the cordiality of our friendship) to men of different views or leanings. And *I* don't know where you could beat—or perhaps match—his finest studies of landscape, since the days of Turner. Indeed some of his Swiss studies of lakes and mountain-sides seem to me quite worthy of Turner himself in many of the qualities we associate with the older and more famous painter's name—and this without any touch of imitation. But now he is gone one thinks less of all that than of his inexhaustible kindness and goodness, and his beautiful sincerity and simplicity of character. He had not many friends, being very shy and rather brusque in manner, so that people were apt to think him odd: but you could not come to know him really without loving and honouring him truly and deeply. . . .

To his youngest Sister

2, The Terrace, Lancing-on-Sea,
Midsummer Day (Oct. 14), 1888.

It is enough to make a saint swear himself black in the face to think of you all detained in London cold and darkness when you might be basking here under a sky of (better than) Italian

sunshine. This is the tenth day of our residence here, and I have had a dip and swim every (I may well say) blessed day. I am now writing face to face with the moon (which is likewise reflected in the water under my window) by the light of the afterglow of a superb sunset. The sea has been all day like an immense pearl for colour, and like nothing but itself for sweetness. While swimming this morning, we could see every pebble and tuft of weed at the bottom of the water as clearly as if the water had been air. But we could not carry out the project of a long walk for fear of the heat—and this with the wind in the north-east. At other times, of course, it is warmer still. . . .

You may perhaps have heard of the proposed alterations in Rome which would carry a new street over Keats's grave—"cut it away," as Ned Jones writes to me—and of course we want to enter a protest against this. But who do you think has (in Ned's words) "been got at—and I believe has promised his interest"? The Emperor of Germany!

So, just sixty-six years ago, a stablekeeper's son and surgeon's apprentice died of consumption in a strange land at the age of twenty-six, and desired on his deathbed that his epitaph should be, "Here lies one whose name was written in

water." And now the greatest of European monarchs is practically interested in the preservation of his grave.

To his Mother

The Pines,
April 5th, 1893.

I am thankful to begin another year of my life by writing to you the first words I write in it. You know that I cannot say what love I want to send you. . . .

. . . No less distinguished a person than Miss Ellen Terry, has sent me a very pretty birthday nosegay, for which I have asked W. (a great friend of hers) to convey my thanks to her. . . .

To the same

The Pines,
Nov. 9th, 1885.

I need not tell you how sorry I was to hear of the death of the Bishop of Ely : nor that I have always retained and shall always retain a sincerely affectionate regard for him—if I do not say " for his memory," one reason may be that as I grow older the dead become so alive and real to me. I have had dreams of my father and of Edith so vivid and delightful that they still seem as real,

and almost as worth remembering, as many actual recollections. The real loss of friends, the insuperable and irremediable separation, is not, one feels more and more deeply and certainly, that which is made by death,—nor yet by difference of opinion or variety of forms of faith and hope, but only by real unworthiness. I am very much gratified by what you tell me of the Bishop's kind remembrance of me. I hope you will like my little book on the great and good man who always insisted so ardently and earnestly in all his writings on the certainty of immortality and reunion with those we have loved, and if ever he became at all unjust, or less than charitable—became so to those who denied or doubted this. (Not that I think the creator of Monseigneur Bienvenu ever was or could have been uncharitable: but I have sometimes thought that he and Mazzini hardly made allowance enough for good and honest and unselfish men who cannot share their faith in personal immortality.)

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To the same

The Pines,
Nov. 25th, 1895,

I was sorry to see De Tabley's death in the *Times* this morning. Walter, who knew him

well, is very sorry—he liked him so much. But he was what I should call prematurely old. When he was here last he said to Miss Watts that Walter and I were quite a pair of boys—and he was just W.'s age—two years my elder. I should really have liked to see him here again. . . .

To the same

April 22nd, 1884.

. . . Last week Watts and I went to dine at Mrs. Ritchie's (*née* Thackeray—now staying at Wimbledon in a pretty old house such as that delicious old town is full of) and to meet Miss Rhoda Broughton—and (more especially on *my* part at least) to meet Mrs. R.'s little children, who are ducks, and very nice-mannered. She told me a pretty story of one, to whom she had been reading "The Rose and the Ring"—
"How kind it was of Grandpapa to write this book for me!" quite believing in its little heart that its grandfather had written the book in its especial behoof so many years before it was dreamt of. I call that *very* darling.

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To the same

The Pines,
Jan. 18th, 1893.

Is M. Nodier a descendant or relation of the celebrated author, and collector of precious books, M. Charles Nodier, who was such a friend of two rising or promising young men (in 1821-2-3 or thereabouts. . . . Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo? He must have been one of the most amiable and delightful men to know that ever lived.

Jan. 29, 1893.

I am very glad M. Nodier was so pleased with my humble note and transcript. Please tell him, if you have the opportunity, how gratified I am, not only to have given pleasure to any one who had shown such consideration and courtesy to you, but to have been brought into any relation with the descendant and representative of M. Charles Nodier—who . . . has evidently bequeathed the best and finest of his qualities to his family—to one of them, at least.

To the same

The Pines,
June 5, 1882.

To-day has been my first free day for a long spell of time. Yesterday night I sent off my *last* proofs, and the biography (in MS.) of Mary Queen of Scots : which I shall be disappointed if you do not like when you read it. I have spared no pains to make it complete, fair, and pleasant to read as well as sufficient for information. After all that has been written about my heroine, it is a fact that there is not even a tolerably good memoir of her : but I do think there will be one, when this is in print. . . . I can answer for its carefulness and fairness. I have taken really great and conscientious pains with it, comparing evidence and collating facts like a lawyer—and supplying all the dates with most punctilious precision.

To the same

The Pines,
July 22nd [no year given].

Yesterday a total stranger, with a letter of introduction, called here to make me a most lovely present. M. Méaulle, an eminent French

engraver, brought me . . . a splendid *proof* set of Victor Hugo's drawings which he has lately engraved—mostly studies of the sea (some of great beauty and power) of old buildings, of strange places and strange faces, taken in Guernsey, and generally illustrative of his "*Tra-vailleurs de la Mer.*"

To the same

The Pines,
Dec. 5th, 1892.

I have made the acquaintance of a neighbour, Lady Brooke (the Sarawak Rajah Brookes) whom Mrs. Ritchie (*née* Thackeray) brought to call on me, with a petition that I would visit her poor bedridden boy who was longing to have a nearer sight of me than out of window (I pass their house twice each morning on my way to and from Wimbledon). So of course I went—and fell in love with the poor boy, who is evidently what his poor mother describes him—the bravest and most patient and bright-tempered young fellow that ever was laid on his back for months if not years at the fidgety age of 16 or thereabouts. She says I "have done him more good than 1000 doctors" (I have half a mind to send you her letter of thanks to me—it is very touching)

but they (doctors) hope he will get round at last. I have called twice since, with books to amuse him—and have managed not to cry in his presence, though thinking of him and his gratitude and pleasure (at sight of me) has more than once made my eyes smart and moisten in private.

To the same

The Pines,
Jan. 4th, 1891.

If you don't know the legend of Ticonderoga, I think you will be as much excited by it as I, who consider it one of the very best supernatural stories on record, and not badly told this time in verse. I also like the close of the last poem, "Christmas at Sea"—and the Pacific Island stories are at all events new and curious. . . . This winter has deprived me of two very old and very dear friends, whom I had known, the one ever since 1858, the other ever since 1861—William Bell Scott and Richard Burton. The death of the latter you will of course have seen in all the papers; the former passed away quietly some few weeks since at Penskill Castle in Ayrshire, of which you may remember his beautiful drawings, engraved in one of his volumes of poems. . . .

Did I mention in a former letter that I was writing an article on Sir Walter Scott, à propos of his newly published Diary, which has so many fresh and interesting passages not given in Lockhart's Life? It will cost a deal of time and toil to make it what I hope it will be, but W. speaks very kindly—and highly—of it as far as I have got—about a quarter of the whole book.

To the same

The Pines,
June 18th [year undated].

I have begun a new book (in prose) of studies in English Poetry consisting of short notes and summary critical remarks on all our chief writers in that line and a good many of the best among the lesser and less famous. I have done with Milton and begun with Dryden (having started from Chaucer). Watts praises both the design and (thus far) the performance to the skies—in terms which I will not quote lest you should be reminded of the glowing praises recorded by Mrs. Gamp as having so “frequent” been bestowed on her by Mrs. Harris. Nichol, who, though much overwhelmed just now by literary work (he is writing a new critical memoir of Byron) has just made us a week's visit . . . found

time to hear and warmly applauded the pages on Milton, in which I have pitched into Puritanism and the selfish ambition and stupid shortsightedness of Cromwell in a way of which you, I think, will not disapprove, though a good many others will, as it goes heavily against the present fashion of blind and parrot-like Cromwell-worship, set first on foot by that hoary villain Carlyle.

Before ending, I must copy out for you a little poem by an old Church poet of Elizabeth's time—the Revd. Thomas Bastard—whose book (dated 1598) has just been reprinted by my good friend Dr. Grosart (I spare you the old spelling).

ON A CHILD JUST BEGINNING TO TALK

Methinks 'tis pretty sport to hear a child
 Rocking a word in mouth yet undefiled.
 The tender racket rudely plays the sound,
 Which, weakly bandied, cannot back rebound,
 And the soft air the softer roof doth kiss,
 With a sweet dying and a pretty miss,
 Which hears no answer yet from the white rank
 Of teeth not risen from their coral bank.
 The alphabet is searched for letters soft.
 To try a word before it can be wrought.
 And when it slideth forth, it goes as nice *
 As when a man doth walk upon the ice.

I hope you think this as delicious a description of a baby "cutting its first words" (as one may say, instead of teeth) as both Watts and I do. The simile from the old game of rackets or

* Daintily, or carefully.

tennis-play, is very sweet to me. . . . And the "pretty miss" (*not* Young Person of the Female Sex) is such a pretty phrase, I think, for a sweet failure to make itself understood by hitting upon the right articulation. . . .

My excuse [for not answering a letter] must be that I have yoked myself again for a moment to the car of the Encyclopædia Britannica, and have been working my best and hardest at a critical and biographical article on Landor, which having now despatched, I have begun another on Marlowe. . . .

Like Watts and the rest of the reading world, I have been greatly disgusted by the sour arrogance, egotism, and malevolence of Carlyle's Reminiscences—but now I can understand and excuse the ugly display of those amiable qualities. It appears that most of the book was written at Mentone. No temper, no character, could be expected to remain tolerable under the influence of that hateful hole—much less those of a dyspeptic, half heart-broken, childless and recent widower past eighty. But, all the same, the book is about the *nastiest* in tone and temper, that ever I read. I *am* so glad to remember that the two things this old man of genius, who hated almost everything and reviled almost everybody, hated and reviled above all others, were poetry .

and republicanism. I wish the prose royalists joy of their champion—I *rather* prefer Victor Hugo myself.

To the same

Ball. Coll.,

Thursday, Dec. 7th, '71.

Many thanks for your letter, and for sending on the letters enclosed. It has been very cold here, but very fine, and not (as I yesterday expected) snowy. Jowett says it is weather to be grateful for, and certainly considering how misty it often is here we may be thankful for such clear fresh days. I have met several of the present generation of undergraduates, and it is interesting to notice Jowett's own unfailing interest in them, their characters and prospects. He has so large a power of sympathy with young men and such a clear intelligence of their wants and views and aims that you feel more and more his fitness for the place he holds and the secret of his broad and deep interest in it.

I am happy to note a steady progress in the University of sound and thorough Republican feeling among the younger fellows of colleges as well as the undergraduates. A Fellow of Wadham is secretary of a Republican Club just established

here ; and under these circumstances I find my position and influence properly recognized—"which is also very soothing." (I am writing with Jowett's pens and paper and in consequence as scratchily and uncomfortably as he does—no wonder he hates having to write a short note or letter as much as I do.) He (Jowett) and I are going up to London by the 5 p.m. train to-day. He only told me he was going yesterday : so like him—"just like Roger." I shall make but a short stay, but there are some things I *must* do and some people I *must* see : after which I hope to settle down at Holmwood till my next visit hither, as I expect J. will re-invite me next (Easter) term.

To the same

The Pines,
Nov. 2nd, 1893.

I took great pains with that little article, and it is most comfortable and encouraging to know that you think so well of my prose, which is so much harder to write than verse that I am proportionately elated by such very kind praise of it. I only hope (honestly and unaffectedly) that it is not *too* kind !

But anyhow I trust you will like and be interested by another sample which I hope to be

able to send you (in the same form of proof sheets) some time this month. It is the first time I ever attempted anything of the sort, and Walter says most satisfactory things of my success—and he ought to know, having written such admirable records of his friends—George Borrow, poor Rossetti, and Tennyson. You will perhaps anticipate that I have been writing down some recollections of Mr. Jowett—not forgetting his visit to Holmwood and his enjoyment of a reading from Dickens which I hope you have not forgotten. W. has written some beautiful sonnets in commemoration of our stay with him at Boar's Hill and walks to and from Oxford—and he said I ought to write something about such a friend. So I thought I wouldn't try to versify my feelings, but would just write down some records of our intercourse—especially as all the accounts and estimates and reminiscences of Mr. Jowett (which are probably numerous and voluminous enough already) deal only with his relations to Oxford, and I could tell—and have told—what sort of a man he was away from Oxford. I think you will say it is done with the right sort of taste and feeling, and I hope you will be interested by my tribute to the memory of so good and true and tried a friend,

To the same

The Pines,
Dec. 9th, 1893.

I am very glad my article on Jowett was found interesting—I hoped you would like it. At first it was very favourably received—"but alas!" quoth Mr. Gladstone's organ, the *Daily News*, "it is all about Mr. Swinburne, and NOT about Mr. Jowett." (As Walter said, I had simply effaced myself—said the least I possibly could about A. C. S. and abstained from telling one or two anecdotes worth record, *because* I should have had to bring in my own name.) And the *Saturday Review* "never met with anything so ill-bred in our time." Of the two, the Tory is more insolent, as you see, than the Radical!

[The following letter of a somewhat earlier date describes the settling into the house which became his home for life.]

To the same

The Pines, Putney Hill,
Sept. 27th, 1879.

.

You will see that *our* flitting has been in the main accomplished—into a large double block

of building, of which we inhabit the left house (looked at from the street) till the right—our own domicile—is ready. Meantime we are gipsying here with furniture enough for sleep, meals and a sitting-room. . . . Each house also has a little “tower” at top to which one gets by ladders . . . off one flat of leads on to another, whence the view is really very nice. The part we live in, as we all agree, is exactly like the outlying (and prettiest) parts of Oxford, where there are (or were) little gardens with large trees overhanging them and little old walls round a “grass-plat.” And we are within an easy walk of Richmond Park, in which I have already made two longish excursions—and also within less than an hour of Piccadilly—and no underground travelling! . . .

I send you to look at (please return it when you write) a very nice letter from poor old Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps in reply to one proposing (not “asking leave” according to the detestable and too usual formula) to dedicate my forthcoming book to him as one of the men who have done most service of the best kind to all students of Shakespeare.

[In February, 1889, he had his bust taken, which is now in the Eton Museum. He writes :—]

Please tell me how long you stay in
London & what is your next move. I
don't try (as everybody advises me not to)
I shall be able to travel this week.

With love to all

I am ever your affection

Herwin

I have been (not sitting but) standing for my portrait in the shape of a bust—to-morrow is to finish it. It is not half so tiring as being painted—but of course I shall be glad when it's over. Walter says the likeness is wonderful—and I think it must be, for I can't look at it without laughing, it is so absurdly like my reflection in the glass, made solid. But I hope you won't think it very conceited or presumptuous of me if I say that I could not help being struck by its likeness to my father. I don't think it can be my fancy, because W. and the sculptor both said the same after comparing his photograph with the cast of my bust. I need not say how glad and proud I was—need I ?

To the same

The Pines,
March 7th, 1889.

I should have thanked you before for your last very kind and precious letter, but I have been swamped (so to speak) in a sea of proofs, of which I send you the last (duplicate) as I think you may perhaps recognize the locality of the little poem.* The last walk I took last year from Lancing to Shoreham was by the sands, and the sea was so

* The poem is "Neap-Tide."

far out and the shore slopes so much that even the tops of the downs were out of sight behind the low sea-bank which shut out everything on shore. It was wonderfully lonely and striking.

My bust is thought a very good likeness ; it is by a young German sculptor named Dressler, who is also making a bust of Wm. Morris—who (he says) is as bad a sitter as I am a good one. Indeed though it was tiring to stand so long, it was much less wearisome than sitting for one's portrait. It is not a commission, but done (as you say) "for his own fame." . . .

Even I, who honestly and truly like cold weather, have felt it now unpleasantly sharp and raw. The pools on the common were a most curious and beautiful sight a few days since. The snow had melted from the land about them, leaving only a thin frostwork on the banks, but still lay so deep and thick and fleecy on the ice that each little lake looked like a round or a square snowfield framed in a rough setting of brown and grey. You can't think how strange and lovely it was.

[A little undated scrap, cut from a letter, tells how]

I have had a letter from Italy which gives me

great pleasure for two reasons. (1) It shows that the Italians are so loyal and true—so grateful to foreigners who really love Italy. (2) They have found out (which is more than we, his countrymen, have) that they ought to raise a national monument to the memory of Shelley. And they do me the honour to say—in very complimentary and gratifying terms—that “of course” my name was “unanimously acclaimed” “a far parte del comitato d’onore pel monumento.” I am awfully glad . . . and I wrote a pretty letter of thanks in the best Italian I can manage.

[Another (undated) letter, probably of 1879, tells of the first coming into the household of the little child whose presence made such a marvellous difference to the poet’s life during the greater part of his sojourn at Putney.]

To the same

The Pines,
Nov. 11th.

And now we have got my small friend, Watts’s little five-year-old nephew, with his mother and an aunt (begging their pardon for bringing them in by way of appendages to the likes of him); and he is a sweet thing in infants. I gave him a

big box of preserved fruits from Fortnum and Mason's, and the child's delight (tho' he likes " *some* of them " very much) is to give the nicest away right and left to all the members of the household including myself. . . . I am grieved to add that being very tired this morning he was rather *less* good than gold at luncheon where there was nobody else but his aunt and I (who am *not* good at inspiring awe and enforcing obedience—which well they knows it at first sight, and behaves themselves according). However, after he had had a sleep he came down as bright and well-behaved as ever, and has bestowed on me two really lovely presents, a highly elaborate match-box, and a penholder which is also a pencil at the other end. It makes such a pleasant difference having a child in the household to rule over you, and make everything bright about him—even if he does so far forget the whole duty of man and the dignity of his years as to behave at luncheon in imitation of certain animals at the Zoological Gardens who make faces over their food—which is very shocking and painful to think of. . . .

We have not yet moved into our own house, but it is getting well on.

[From this time onward the letters to his

family are full of the sayings and doings of "Bertie," from infancy to schoolboy-hood. I select one or two for quotation, as showing his extreme love and tenderness for children.]

To the same

The Pines and cetrer,
Feb. 22nd, 1881.

I *must* begin my letter for once with a tiny poem written yesterday in the same hour that the little thing said this strangest and prettiest word ever spoken in my hearing by any child. We were looking at my Pictorial Shakespeare, and came upon the old woodcut reproduced in so many books from some religious MS. of the time of Edward III., representing a very fine young man with curls and turned-up shoes, &c., &c., meeting Death beside an open grave at noonday face to face. Death is not a vulgar skeleton, but a very lean, tall man partly draped with a loose cloak thrown about him : very impressive, but not disgusting or frightening.

Looking in a book where stood
Carved of old on old-world wood
Death, and by the grave's edge grim,
Pale, the young man facing him,
Straight the child most loved of me
Asked what strange thing this might be,
Gaunt and great of limb ?

Death, I told him ; and, surprise
 Deepening more his wildwood eyes
 (Like a sweet swift thing's whose breath
 Spring in green groves nourisheth),
 Up he turned his rosebright face
 Glorious with its seven years' grace,
 Asking—"What is death ?"

I had written so far after he left me and was going to write more when I was interrupted ; and on showing the lines to Watts after dinner, he exhorted me to leave off there . . . and though I might write ever such fine lines to follow it would impair the perfection of the effect or impression produced by ending with Bertie's own three words. Did you ever hear sweeter ones—or stranger ?

To his eldest Sister

The Pines,
 Mar. 29, '86.

. . . Poor dear Bertie has been laid up in bed very ill ever since Thursday with a damp doorstep settled on his lungs—or at least *some* damp affecting those poor little organs and stopping up his throat—so that we have been in distress about him, though as of course you see by my tone we have not been in apprehension of danger—but it seems to me much more than a week (tho' they *say* it is really but four or five days)

since I saw my darling. Which I know I could miss him almost as well as Betsy Prig. . . . They all say he is getting round ; but it has been a serious trouble ; and the child is so very gentle and patient when out of his usual sorts that—especially in such a hardy and sturdy little fellow—it is very touching. He just comes and sits into the same armchair with me and puts his little arm about my neck and rests his little head on my breast or shoulder. It is all I can do to remember that he is uncomfortable and not rejoice in having him again on the old terms. . . .

To the same

2, The Terrace, Lancing-on-Sea, nr. Worthing,
Nov., '87.

I was just thinking about my next letter to you, and the many pleasant things I had to put into it, when your letter announcing poor H.'s* death came and changed—of course—the tone of my intended letter. I need not say how sorry I am for poor Aunt E. ——. I could not say it, if I were to try. . . . As for the poor fellow himself, no one who has any trust in a future and better life—as I have—can imagine that the change is not a blessing far beyond any poor human words

* A cousin.

or fancies. What you tell me about his love of his profession, and the noble tribute to his character given by his comrades, is so beautiful that it would be profane to call it pathetic. . . . And now I have so much to write to you in praise of this glorious country that I believe I shall never get through half of what I have to say at a sitting. And if what I do say should be mis-timed or troublesome—if you are too busy about sadder and more serious things to care for my raptures about Sussex—please put this letter aside for the present : and anyhow please don't think it unfeeling of me to talk about scenery when I have been for days brooding on the description I meant to try and send you. It will be wretchedly inadequate, I know : but I also know you would enjoy the view, if I could transport you to the outskirts of the little copse or spinney perched on the highest point of the seaside downs in this part of the county. I think it is *the* most glorious view I ever saw. Watts and I were going up the lower part of the nearest down, after having passed the fine old church (of Lancing) and some beautiful wooded country, when he said how nice he thought it would be to build a house in a curve of the high open down above us to the right. I thought it would be lovely but *rather* bleak—the hillside being perfectly treeless and shrubless and

open to every wind (no shelter inland for ever so far)—and said that on the whole, when he had built his farm there, I would not keep house with him in the winter. Before we had gone half a mile higher (I should think) I, who was ahead, saw a fine old farmhouse built in the very spot—the exact part of the higher down—that he had chosen for his homestead, seeing it only from below. And when I saw it, I saw—and told him—how right he had been and how wrong I had been. But when I reached the top of the steep ascent above, it would have been my turn to crow. It is the highest point of the seaboard for many miles, and wherever one goes, east or west, one sees the above-mentioned little spinney or copse of thin, lank, rather scrubby trees, which crowns it. Behind this the downs sweep away inland, melting into each other and rising and falling and swelling and sinking like waves of a greater sea, caught and fixed in the act of motion—nothing but the infinite range of softly-rounded heights to be seen to left or right when you look northward ; but turning east you see Shoreham with its broad estuary lying (as it seems) quite near at hand, but looking a tiny village. Then, going round behind the copse and a little way down and up again, you come out upon the brow of the down to westward, after passing through

a broad grassy way cut crosswise (+) through a great wilderness of whin—and there (as aforesaid) is the most glorious view, without exception, that I ever set eyes on. Miles upon miles upon miles of woodland and meadow and hillside, farm and village and town—Worthing, with its noble pier, and all the country beyond and about it—at such a distance below that you then first realize how high the point of view must be. And always beyond all, and glorifying all the scene with its own incomparable glory of loveliness, the sea.

Another day we went over Shoreham Church (or cathedral, as I always feel inclined to call it) and agreed that we had never seen a more beautiful or a grander building. Some of it is of the very oldest Norman—eleventh century—and even to my ignorant eyes as impressive as if I knew something about architecture. They have stuck in a modern altar and east window, glaring and garish and quite out of keeping with the beautiful old arches of the aisles on either side. Another sea-gull (besides myself) had got in and was flying up and down in much bewilderment ; I hope it got out at last, but I don't know. I go almost every day to look up at the church and walk around it ; I don't think I ever was so fascinated by the majesty and beauty of any building. I enjoy it almost as much as the landscape—or as if it were

a thing of natural beauty—and I hardly ever have felt that about a mere work of human hands. But—for that matter—what superhuman hands some of those old builders have had !

I had much to say about a natural product of the neighbourhood—the Shoreham infant—but I have no room left to inflict more chatter on you. I *must*, however, observe that the Shoreham infant, boy or girl, as soon as it can toddle, assumes a nautical swagger or rolling walk which would upset the gravity of a bishop or a judge—that it always claims the upper hand of the Shoreham adult, and is always made way for as it struts along the crown of the causeway, morally shoving its elders into the gutter, before it can *well* stand—and that it would be enough of itself to make its native town worth a visit.

To the same

2, The Terrace, Lancing-on-Sea,
nr. Worthing,
Nov. 3rd, 1887.

You will see by the newspapers that the gale of the day before yesterday was such as comes but once in twenty years. . . . When I mention that the sea was breaking right on to the Worthing road and sending sheets or fountains of spray full

across it, I need hardly mention what route I selected that day for my morning walk. It was impossible to stand upright without some sort of support, so that when there was no wall or railing to the leeward one had to duck and dodge or crawl forward with bent back in the most absurd way. Never did you see a sweeter sight than the great esplanade at Worthing when at last—in the shape and likeness of a drowned rat—I got there. It was covered with all manner of sea-drift—large stones and bits of iron, masses of seaweed, all sorts of odds and ends. Yesterday morning there were men at work pretty nearly all the way clearing and repairing the road as far as possible. There was also the brightest and most perfect though by no means the largest rainbow I ever saw. And on the esplanade, at a corner where the day before the strongest men could not stand upright without clutching hold of some support, there were groups of little children (one tiny girl as lovely as an angel or a baby) looking down on the brown and yellow waves that were breaking just below, with intent and intense delight. I went along the pier (which would not have been a very advisable expenditure of energy the day before) and examined the sea and the coast with my “marine” glass. The colour of the sea, I must confess, was hideous—

London mud and London fog mixed—but it was still rolling and heaving deliciously. My favourite afternoon walk (I generally take two in this divine salt air, daily) is to Shoreham, our nearest neighbouring town eastward, as Worthing is westward. It is one of the quaintest and strangest places I ever saw ; an inland town which at certain hours of the day, from certain points of view inside it, is apparently on the very edge of the sea—whereas really the nearest way to the shore (in spite of the town's name) is a full—I should say a long—mile. It has a hideous semi-attached suburb (more properly, two semi-detached ones) with railway station, great wharves, and what they call “ timber ponds ” (we neither of us ever saw or heard of such a term for timber-yards before—did you ?) stretching along the windings of an immense estuary—large enough to have splendid ships moored up on its muddy banks, which one may walk about and examine without trespassing (which is forbidden) on the main wharf. . . . At high tide the sea comes more than a mile up, and floods the mudbanks so gloriously that if you see it (you don't see them) at high tide, it looks as if the town was really built on a long deep broad creek or channel of the sea : whereas it isn't at all. The real town lies away from all this, with one old winding main street going

quietly through it from quiet meadowland into quiet copses and downs. Its glory, as perhaps you know, is its old church. I am afraid you would think I was romancing if I tried to tell you how beautiful and impressive it is. I never saw a cathedral which fascinated me so much. Every day, when I go into the town, I go to look at it, and usually to walk round it, as the churchyard is open at all its wickets (there are so many, and it is so large, that one day I missed the gate I ought to have come out by, and found myself in an unknown, unlovely, and bewildering part of the town—from which, after many wanderings, I could only extricate myself by going back into the churchyard and round the church till I found which was the west gate).—I have stopped at this point, trying to hit on the right words to describe to you some of its (the church's) beauties, but I am so ignorant of architecture that I don't know how to begin. There are no end of buttresses, and niches with three short pillars in them (I don't the least know what for, but I suppose just to be lovely), and window-arches wrought and carved as if to give one a peep into heaven—and all the divine building looks more as if it had grown than as if it had been built. And our own countrymen go on raving about foreign churches, from Rouen to Rome ! I am sure you would agree with

me that nothing could beat this—one of the glories of your county. I do really begin to think that Sussex is worthy to be your county; and I can't well say more for it than that.

The Duke of Norfolk who was duke in 1832 (*Bernard Edward Howard*) was his grace's name—what ears his sponsors must have had!) built a suspension bridge over the river at the western entrance of the town, just where the river becomes an arm of the sea, which is almost as great a delight to me to cross twice daily as it might be if I were a blessed chick. Beneath it on each side there are squares of shallow water full of soft, green weed, set in little frames of green with tiny paths along the four sides which just let one walk on one foot at a time about or between them—and these are oyster-beds. One day as I was returning from Shoreham at sunset the whole glory of a most wonderful evening sky was reflected—and almost improved—in these tiny quiet pools or lakelets, twelve if not twenty times over. It was like seeing a number of water-colour drawings (I did not mean a pun, really and truly) by Turner set in frames of bright green, lovelier and more appropriate than gold.

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P.S.—I forgot to state that the architect employed by his dear good grace of Norfolk has

put on the top of two arches which dignify the "Norfolk Bridge" a horse, which is *too* palpably a rocking-horse, and a lion which has *too* obviously come out of a Noah's Ark. We call them the gee-gee and the poodle.

To the same

C/o Mr. Jermy,
Mill House, Sidestrand, Norwich,
Sept. 18th, 1883.

Yesterday we left the metropolitan splendours of Cromer for the delicious little refuge from whence I write to thank you for your letter of the 13th from Sidmouth. . . . I waited till we were settled here to write, as it would have been useless dating from the Bath Hotel which we only stayed in till good Mr. Jermy, the miller of this tiny old village, was able to receive us as lodgers. On entering I find an envelope directed to me, left by the outgoing tenant to be delivered immediately on my arrival, and containing a copy of verses of a most fervent and flowery description, adjuring me to confer fame upon this lonely country—which verses I find to be the production of the author (name unknown) of the very article in the *Daily Telegraph* which sent us hither. It appeared on Aug. 30th under the highly "æsthetic" title of "Poppy-land," and on my showing

it to Watts and saying, " This must really be a delicious sort of place, in spite of this worthy man's florid style of cockney enthusiasm," he set his heart on coming here in case the weather were suitable ; and it has been very favourable hitherto. But is it not funny we should have got into the very house occupied till last evening by the man who had unconsciously induced us to come into the country ? We are quite near Cromer—about 3 or 4 miles at most, though our own post-town is Norwich—and we get last night's papers here between 9 and 10 a.m.—it is now just 10½. The whole place is fragrant with old-fashioned flowers, sweet-william and thyme and lavender and mignonette and splendid with great sun-flowers. We have bathed once or twice—the sea is much better than at Southwold.

[In another letter he speaks of—]

. . . these good people [his hosts at Side-strand] seeing a notice somewhere of my sonnet (" Near Cromer ") in *Home Chimes*, and sending for that magazine on the strength of this notice and taking it in ever since. I told Miss Jermy this morning that I had written a poem about their garden here which was now in the printer's hands, and she said with the quaintest simplicity, " O, sir, how good of you—how very kind ! "

To his Mother

Mill House,
Sidestrand, Norwich,
Sept. 17th, 1884.

The day before the day before yesterday, some friends of Watts's now staying at Cromer, Mr. and Mrs. Grant Allen, called on us, accompanied by their son, a gentleman aged between half-past five and a quarter to six: who had expressed a wish to see me because he was so fond of some of my verses! There—after that, don't let anybody talk to me! The chick, when I was presented to him, was rather shy at first, but presently allowed me to lift him on to a chair, to look at some very astonishing coloured prints on the wall; and on my enquiring if he liked maps, replied "Yes!" with an energy worthy of the son of a distinguished scientific writer like his father. So—having got him in my arms—I carried him comfortably into the room where I am now writing, and pointed out to him this tiny village or hamlet of Sidestrand on the map against the wall: whereat there was an exclamation of delight and wonder, and a look of expansive interest in two of the largest and darkest blue eyes that ever saw five birthdays. There is no doubt that this is a wonderfully fine air for children.

Such a picture of health and sweetness and brightness you do *not* see every day—if you did, this poor earth would *be* “the kingdom of heaven.” . . . It will surprise and indeed astonish you to learn that we parted the best of friends, with an engagement to meet again, which I hope will be soon kept! Really I don’t know what to do with myself for pride and pleasure at the notion of a little child liking any of my verses so much as to want to see the writer, and to invite itself (as one may say) from Cromer to Sidestrand for that purpose.

To his eldest Sister

The Pines,
Dec. 11, '87.

. . . I never did pine and weary after a “paradise lost” as I do after this Sussex seaboard—never for many a year; I thought I had outgrown such longings. But I have been yearning after my daily walk—and frequent dip—like a boy parted from his home. There is one walk I dream of night and day, which I first explored on a dark night after the sun had set, reflecting that it never could seem so wild and strange by day. . . . The road I was telling you of runs from nowhere to nowhere, and is so lonely, with a vast

stretch of fen or pastureland on either side, that to be alone there in the dark without even starlight and with a wild wind blowing was like a dream—and simply delicious. I never had a nicer walk ; and then on returning by day with a good glass, one had a magnificent view of the high downs with precipitous sides eastward beyond Shoreham closing in all the east side of the horizon as the other range closes in all the north side—W. the fields or fens sweeping away to Lancing—and southward the green sea-banks shutting out the beach—but you *feel* the sea in the air at every step. . . . But what you should see is the estuary when the tide is coming up with a high wind, miles inland. The sea is of course far out of sight, and standing on the old bridge you see a broad brown yellow river gone demented and running the wrong way, inland and uphill, with all its might—all the unnatural might of madness. It is *too* queer to see it rushing up among the woods between the downs, boiling and surging almost like the outer sea. The tide flows and ebbs for miles inland above Shoreham. That is something like a country ! and I am

Ever your most affectionate brother.

To the same

2, The Terrace, [Lancing],
Nov. 11, '89.

. . . And now I am going to be egotistic and trouble you—who have so many other things to think of—with a few words on my “experience of life” here just now. W. and I had a most lovely walk (I had discovered it) yesterday, half-way across the water-meadows to Shoreham and then up by a road (on this side of the Sussex Pad) on to the very highest point of the downs, which we used to reach by a not so *very* short steep climb: and this was W.’s favourite walk (all these three years) till now, when he admits that I have found a better way (I should think it was! you are at the top before you know where you are).

I don’t say I fear it is useless—I know it is—for me to try once more to point out that there *can* be no climate so good for nurslings and fosterlings of the English Channel—like every one of us—as that of the said E.C. It’s all very well, but if you came down here (I don’t mean literally to Lancing) and gave the climate as fair a trial as you do the climate of these foreign places that fashionable doctors bring into fashion, I cannot imagine that you would not find it wholesomer

and sweeter than any other air in the world. . . . You would want to get acclimatized : but when you were you would know that England was meant for English folk, and was wholesomer than any other country. Not only when the S.W. wind is hurling our waves here in shore : to-day it has been a sharp, steady east wind—due east—and I have had a most delicious swim (not a very long one, of course, alas !). And yesterday, after our long walk that took up all the morning, of course I had to get my plunge at 4 p.m. or thereabouts, just before the sun took *its* plunge behind a great blue-black rampart of cloud. I saw I could only be just in time—and I ran like a boy, tore off my clothes, and hurled myself into the water. And it was but for a few minutes—but I was in Heaven ! The whole sea was literally golden as well as green—it was liquid and living sunlight in which one lived and moved and had one's being. And to feel that in deep water is to feel—as long as one is swimming out, if only a minute or two—as if one was in another world of life, and one far more glorious than even Dante ever dreamed of in his Paradise. (Poor great man, he only knew the Mediterranean ! And I dare say he couldn't swim.)

It is a comfort to know that you don't mind being written to on foolscap, because I'm at an

end of my note-paper, and am *not* going to leave off without relating a little anecdote. . . . I was coming out of Shoreham (having taken my usual walk round the church) when two young ladies, who, if one had been standing on the other's shoulders (had that been possible) *might* have reached a little higher than my knee, stopped me on the highway, and silently but resolutely refused to let me pass. I could but stoop—humbly—and ask what I was wanted for. “Hayp’ny,” said one precious pet. “But I haven’t a half-penny in my pocket—I’ve only got pennies,” said I. A penny would do, to divide between them, I was given to understand. But I thought not, and gave each a penny—and a kiss. So far, you will say, the story is not worth telling. But when I was walking briskly on I heard a sharp patter of little feet behind me, and stopped, and saw these tiny chicks trotting as hard as they could to catch me up. What was it now, I asked, laughing. “Want to kiss you,” said the (very slightly) taller one. I needn’t say whether or not I squatted down and opened my arms; and first one and then the other put her bits of arms up to my neck, and kissed me so affectionately that I felt once more how much too good little children are to us, and then went trotting back to Shoreham. . . .

To his Mother

Friday, Oct. 25th, 1888.

2, The Terrace, Lancing-on-Sea.

As I was returning from Shoreham the day you left, there was the most wonderful pageant of clouds, an hour before sunset—or less, that I ever saw; a great part of the western sky covered with what looked like immense but most delicate and elaborate patterns of the finest old lace-work; tracery of dark and bright grey too intricate to follow, but magically harmonious and faultless: then, from south to north, an infinite range of low columns or pillars, some erect against the bright background, some bent aslant, some bowed and broken—reminding me of the basalt pillars on the mountain-side in Auvergne that I once tried to describe to you. As I said to W., Turner might have painted and Shelley might have described that sky, but no one else could. The weather is still so splendid that I have been twice in the sea to-day and feel much the better for my second plunge—the wind being now S.W. I am so very glad and thankful that you feel the better and not the worse for your too short excursion, and that you are as much impressed as I am by the wonderful grandeur

and beauty of *my* "cathedral." I go there almost every day, just to walk round it and (as you say) to give thanks for it, and the day before yesterday I actually found out a new point of view (N.W.) from which I saw a fresh beauty in it almost finer than one sees from due west.

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To the same

Victoria Hotel, Guernsey,
May 15th.*

Between Saturday morning when I wrote last and Monday evening when I write now from the same place but on different paper, etc., I have seen on the whole the loveliest and wonderfulest thing I ever saw—the island of Sark. Nichol and I went off at 3½ in a sailing boat, and after endless doublings and backings and shiftings of sail we dodged with our little boat in sideways between a crevice in the cliffs at 6½, and found ourselves in a little harbour, with a breakwater in miniature, landed—passed through a huge tunnel of arched rock—and were in front of a road winding up between two hills blazing with furze and all kinds of spring flowers, by which we walked up over hills and downs and tiny villages, through

* I have no means of dating this letter. The writing belongs to an earlier period than the preceding extracts.—(ED.)

meadows and orchards in immeasurable variety of flower to the hotel whither we had lost our way—but in an island rather under five miles long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad it is not easy to wander very far from the straight road. There are superb precipices, hollow gullies, caves and tunnels of sea-rock, headlands and staircases of crag, and one awful pit which the tide enters at flood but into which you can look down at top from the summit almost of the cliff or side wall of the down: among all which we had a day and a half of the best scrambling I *ever* had in my life. I must go back, for there is one path I have neither climbed up nor down. I have not been *in* the sea—and we could not enter or even see into the great and famous cave of all, which only showed itself once a fortnight at extreme low tide: and of course not yesterday or this morning. These are omissions that must be repaired. But as for the famous *Coupée* or passage over the narrow (!) ledge of road between two edges of cliff, it is too absurd to talk of. Very lovely and very high—but having expected a place where we should be unable to walk abreast, we both burst out laughing when we came upon a bit of road where (as I observed) one might drive—if one knew how to drive—a tandem right over, with perfect ease and comfort, and on one side could quite easily have

climbed down to the sea and up again. The lies of guide-books ! They write as if two could hardly pass, and from five to six even might walk across abreast. But everywhere the glory of flowers, and splendour of crags and cliffs and sea defy all words. . . .

[The following letter records a much later visit.]

To the same

Hôtel du Gouffre, Guernsey,
Sept. 6th, 1882.

You will see that our project, announced in my last letter, is thus far very successfully carried out, that Watts and I have found shelter for a day or two before we go to Sark—otherwise Cerg, according to the newest light. I hope this will find you all well, though it will not be possible for me to hear from you for a fortnight or three weeks, as we shall be constantly on the move till our return home. For my own part I feel as if I would almost be content to live and die where we are. Watts . . . sends you one of the photographs enclosed, and I send the other. But nothing can express the beauty and sublimity of this wonderful island ; certainly no photograph can, much less any words of mine. On

landing, after a night passage during which I was more nearly frozen than ever before in all my days, having brought no wraps and being as usual quite unable to sleep in the cabin, I had the bitter disappointment of finding that the papers which announced Victor Hugo's presence in the island had misled my confiding mind, as he has not come back to his beautiful house and garden in Peterport, the capital of the aforesaid island, for the last three years. This was a bad beginning—and the next thing was that Watts must needs go out by himself on the rocks after sunset without me to look after him, and all but break his left arm with a fall on the slippery seaweed-covered surface of them, so that he can only swim with one arm, which I find by trying can be done for a little bit, but is not satisfactory in proportion to the fatigue. But he says I may say it is getting better, though it looks a very ugly bruise. He also says the scenery reminds him of Switzerland *plus* the sea. But I don't believe any inland scenery can be one half as grand or as lovely. The house we are lodging in is a little to the right of the "Gouffre" photograph, nestled in a cleft of the rocks. It is very clean and comfortable in a homely way, which is more than can be said for the Peterport hotels. We are going to Sark in a day or two, but I shall be very sorry to leave—

even for my beloved "Cerg"—this lovely place, to which (after seeing it in an excursion) I proposed that we should adjoin; and we are both rejoicing that we did so. We had the most delicious swim this morning in a bay walled in with precipices, and one little cleft for the road down between them—you never saw or dreamed of anything so lovely. I *would* settle here if I could give up all company, and if the air were more bracing and less warm and relaxing—I was almost faint with the heat, even in this Arctic summer, before we got down to the bathing-place, though there was not a glimpse of sun. . . . There never were such sea-views as here. One is sometimes reminded of the Undercliff, but with all my love and gratitude towards our old home-country, I must allow that this is far grander. I meant to have written or tried to write you a fuller and better account of some at least among the glorious scenes we are in the midst of—but no prose or verse except Victor Hugo's could give you even a faint notion of the island which will always be associated with his name. . . .

[The two following foreign letters have no year date, but from references in them I should place them in 1869.]

To his eldest Sister

Hôtel de France, Vichy,
Aug. 10th.

I send you some flowers gathered yesterday on the top of a mountain 5000 feet above the level of the sea—the Puy de Dôme, which Burton and I scaled and found ourselves at the summit wrapt in a rolling and rushing sea of mist—very favourable of course to the chance of a prospect. However we got it lower down on coming again into sunlight, thanks to his glasses for taking measurements and longitudes and other professional and scientific things. The view of the Auvergne country was splendid and singular—a barren and broken land so laboriously cultivated that not an inch was left waste, and the whole stretch of it from left to right looked like a carpet of many colours—vineyard, cornfield, woods, etc. From that height the land which, as we passed through it in our drive upwards, to the foot of the mountain, we had found steep, hilly, and irregular, seemed a dead level of plain. The mountain is clothed with heather, but this that I send you is the only bit of white I found. Eastward from the highest peak of the range (where I gathered these, stretches a long series of volcanic hills, cones and craters alternating. One

crater which we went to examine is now the image of a Roman amphitheatre, only wanting gladiators and lions. It has got itself covered with grass and worn into numberless round rocks from bottom to top of the sloping sides by the feet of the cattle who come there to browse: and these give it the exact look of a theatre with rising rows of seats. Burton, who has made a study of volcanoes in all parts of the world, tells me that this is in one thing about the most extraordinary of volcanic ranges—the highest peak (Puy de Dôme—"puy" is Auvergnat for height or peak) is *not* volcanic: the lava has not taken effect there, but baffled, has burst out again and again along the whole range of mountains extending east beneath it in a vast volcanic chain. The crater we examined is called from its look the Nid de Poule.

Clermont-Ferrand, the neighbouring town where we have been for the last two days, is most beautifully planted among its mountains, and has a cathedral which is simply one of the finest I ever saw. The altar is of copper gilt, marvellously carved all over into figures and flowers; date thirteenth century, so you will know how exquisite and noble the style is. I am not sure that I ever saw such magnificent windows; the variety and harmony of colours is miraculous to

our poor modern eyes. I have got for you others, three photographs—one larger and two less—of the front porch with its sculptures and spires. When we came in sight of it we both broke out in one cry of admiration: it is so rich and various, so simply noble and dignified, with all its wealth and exuberance of ornament. There are two drawbacks: the cathedral is *much* too short for its great height, so as to seem truncated or cut off short to one looking down from the high altar, and it is so hemmed in and pushed upon and barricaded by the shops and houses of the neighbouring streets, that you can only see in full one side of it, the back, which is not worthy of the glorious front.

This place is doing me great good—I was rather spent with the heat in London (alas! my business there with books and publishers is not yet over!) and now Burton says he never yet saw me so fresh and well. . . . Coming here from Paris on a broiling day with my back to the engine, I got to feel as sick as anything, and you cannot think how kind and careful of me he was. I feel now as if I knew for the first time what it was to have an elder brother. He is the most cordial, helpful, sympathetic friend to me it is possible to have: and it is a treat at last to have him to myself instead of having as in London to share him with

all the world and his wife and children, from Lords Clarendon and Stanley to Col. This and Capt. That. I rather grudge Mrs. Burton's arrival here on Monday, though we are excellent friends, and I dare say I shall see none the less of him, (That reminds me that we had both at once the same idea in our ascent of the Puy de Dôme—he began gathering flowers to press for her and send by post, as I did for you; but he got no *white* heather. There were bilberries all the way up—very Mouncees-like.) We stay about a week after her coming to get through our *course* here—which is making him (not me, thank goodness) so fat.

To his Mother

The Pines,
June 20th, 1890.

How wrong of —— to get lumbago! I . . . have had flying pains of the sort lately (have a shadowy touch of it while I write these words) but can always walk them down—drive off the pain by bullying it with exercise. Many a day I have gone up this hill aching afresh at every step, and walked into Wimbledon, and home again as comfortable as Bertie—who is *the* ideal of health and strength. (There's one comfort—

between ourselves—that towering athlete who looks down, physically, on his uncle and me, is *not* above sweetmeats—any more than I am. Crisp gingerbread, and small biscuits with currants in them, when brought out from Wimbledon in my coat pockets (as they have been this day, correctly packed and of course in paper bags) are as acceptable to Sixteen as they would have been to Six. What a privilege it is to have known a child as intimately as possible from the one age to the other, and not only to have won and obtained his regard (I don't want to brag, and say "his affection," though perhaps I might), but to be told by his mother and his guardian that I have drawn him on—coaxed him so to say—to enjoy and understand what, thanks to you, my darling mother, *I* did when a little boy—Shakespeare and Molière as far as young boys can or ought to understand them—and that is most of the way—and Scott and Dickens altogether.

To the same

The Pines,
March 18th, 1882.

And now I must come down from more important and interesting matters to my own personal

affairs, which have been waiting all this time, though 5 or 6 days ago I very nearly began a letter about them to you in sheer self-satisfaction. I have this week received, as I consider, by far the highest compliment ever paid me in my life. The Editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* has asked me to undertake the article on Mary Queen of Scots which is to appear in the next volume. Out of all the great historical "authorities" and "distinctions," all the specialists and scholars in the country, who might have been—and might have expected to be—asked to undertake it—for of course there is no man to whom it would not be a great compliment—it is I, a mere poet, and therefore (as most worthy folk would infer) a naturally feather-headed and untrustworthy sort of person, who am selected to undertake such a responsibility and assume such an authority as a biographer and historian, simply on the ground of my previous publications on the subject which are taken as warrants of my industry and research, fairness and accuracy. I do not pretend to disguise the fact that I am really gratified and indeed rather elated at such a tribute to my conscientiousness and carefulness, if nothing else.

To the same

The Pines,
Oct. 25 [1880].

Jowett came here to luncheon the other day . . . I read him a translation I have made of a very famous Greek poem—the “Grand Chorus of Birds” in a play of Aristophanes called the “Birds”—which a day or two before I had done into English word for word almost, and literally line for line, in exactly the same metre as the original, only adding rhymes throughout—which is considered no small feat. I read the poem just before leaving Eton—Mr. Joynes set it me to read out of school hours—and I always thought it what it is, one of the very finest things ever done in the world. And I have always fancied or dreamed how nice but how impossible it would be to give an idea or an echo of it in English. So one morning before getting up I thought, suppose I were to try, as after all we have the same sort of verse in our own beautiful dear old English—and so I tried, and found it feasible with only two or three hours’ work, rhymes and all. It is half sacred, half secular, half humorous, half imaginative, and all poetical in the highest degree of its kind: showing how the first-born of

all things was a winged thing, divine and creative Love, who burst out from the shell of everlasting darkness with wings of gold, as a flower bursts out of the bud, and of Him come all the Gods and all generations of men and birds—but the winged creation is the likest and nearest their golden-winged father and creator. And so on till he comes down to the old Greek reverence for all birds, and the pretty though silly superstitions about their giving signs and omens of good and bad luck, telling what to do or avoid, and being always held holy and precious. I wonder (as I said to Watts) what a Greek of the great age would have thought of our battues and pigeon-massacres!

Now you will have had enough of them and me. . . .

To the same

The Pines,
Nov. 6th, 1880.

. . . In an hour or two I must be off with Watts to Oxford on a visit to Jowett—we stay over Sunday and return on Monday, and I have just time left after many interruptions to scrawl these few lines. . . .

Nor have I any more important news than

that the translated poem which I told you of has made—if that signifies much—a greater hit than anything original I have done for a long time. Watts tells me that the editor of the *Athenæum*—where it appeared—went down to Cambridge (he is sure) on purpose to see what effect it had produced, on the day of the publication; and found that university ringing with praise of it as a miracle of translation both for spirit and fidelity. And I do think it rather a wonder that I should have managed it line for line and word for word in English rhymes.

Excuse my vanity or self-complacency, and accept one more item of news.

[Here he goes on to describe a display of fireworks given by “Bertie” on Guy Fawkes’ Day.]

To the same

The Pines,
Nov. 16th, 1880.

We had a nice day at Oxford. I met one or two old friends and made one or two pleasant acquaintances. It is pleasant to see a man like Jowett so exactly in his place and enjoying it and his work so thoroughly. He had turned the old

dining-hall into a really splendid modern library for the use of the undergraduates, and altogether has wonderfully transformed and improved the look of the college since the dark ages when I was there. It was a lovely day, one of those on which the whole place, and especially the old college gardens look their loveliest. . . . My darling mother, it is only too good of you to care about my doings in translation or other work at all, and to remind me of dear ——'s [his father's] liking for a former attempt of mine. The greatest and most precious compliment (I don't like that word, but you know what I mean—something which one feels as a pleasure and a credit in one) that I ever received for any mere writing of mine was his telling me of the unbroken interest with which he had read right through my huge play of *Bothwell*. I am now going—or meaning—to begin again with my last play on the subject of “Mary Queen of Scots,” dealing with her last days and heroic death in expiation of any little—mistakes—in her previous career. It is a difficult subject to manage—that is, to manage worthily—but as Watts says, there can be none finer. . . .

To his eldest Sister

2, The Terrace.

Oct. 30, '89.

9.25 p.m.

(Excuse foolscap, as I haven't any note paper in the room, and am too tired and sleepy to go down and get some from Walter). . . . I hope you—even in London—are enjoying this divine return of summer in which we are basking here. To-day when I was in the sea it was like swimming into heaven—the glorious sunlight on and in the splendid broad rolling waves made one feel for the minute as if one was in another and better world—and it was so warm and soft and mild (with this lovely west wind which the sea here always wants to make it perfect) that one would have taken it for midsummer. And then this afternoon the wind grew stronger and made it so magnificent to walk by and look at as it came hurling in and making cascades in the sunlight over the breakwaters, that I think I was *very* good not to go in again. I came home from Shoreham by moonlight—when there was any—coming and going in and out of great masses of bluish-black cloud ; and once for two or three minutes, when the moon hung in a sort of loop or gap in the huge dark mass, it had the most absurdly beautiful look—as if it was winking.

. . . I have seen to-day . . . *the* very smallest walking baby . . . carrying in its imperceptible arms the very biggest, heaviest, and most self-satisfied baby—in long clothes—that ever I did see. One longed to say, “My darling, won’t you let me carry Baby for you?” only one felt one couldn’t carry it half so well or safely as this precious pet who *didn’t* come up to my knee. I do think the instinct of motherliness—of loving care and delight and thoughtfulness and tenderness—in tiny girls who are trusted with babies is about the most beautiful and delightful thing in the world! Sometimes one sees a little boy, charged in the same way, as devoted and exulting in his charge—and that is a sweet sight—but with little girls it is the rule, which shows how far superior you are to us. . . .

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,

June 1st, 1887.

I must write literally at once to thank you for your delightful letter of yesterday, as you tell me you are going to Germany next week—which I hope will do you all the good and give you all the pleasure in the world. I am very glad you like my “ode” so well; and it may amuse you to hear that a few minutes before I found your

letter on my table I had heard that it (the ode, not the letter on the table) was greatly liked and admired by the last person—except two—whom I should have expected to like or admire it—the Prince of Wales. (The other two are the Queen and her late loyal Premier—W. E. G.) I must say (as I did say to Watts when he told me) that I think it nothing less than very generous of him—for, as Watts says, I never wrote anything more essentially republican in spirit and in tone. Indeed he wished me to say, and thinks I should have said, more about the Queen than the one little word I did say; but on such matters one can only be guided by the instinct of one's conscience. I quite understand what you say about the too exclusive praise of science; but there has been nothing since the days of Sir Isaac Newton like the advance of science in this half-century, and there have been other generations as great in other ways (except, *I* should say, in painting). And one *can't* manage to touch on every subject that ought to be handled in writing of our fruitful and wonderful age, in the course of 250 lines. As it is, Watts thinks the poem too long; I am glad you do not. I thought (before putting pen to paper) that it would be the right length; and I think it is. I may add that my favourite stanza is the 46th.

I don't think you *ought* to be out of England on the jubilee day, when *we* think (if feasible) of running down—and up—to Beachy Head to see the bonfire there. . . .

To his Mother

The Pines,
June 28th, 1887.

. . . Nothing could give me so much pleasure as to know that you like the selection [the published “Selections from Swinburne”]. I did want to put in some of my longer lyrical poems, but Watts said they would overweight the book, and it would be better to put in some dramatic extracts which at first I had not thought of doing. . . . How more than satisfactorily the good Queen's Jubilee has gone off! Watts and I both think that the genuine and really beautiful success of it will have been—and will yet be, in its general and lasting influence—a heavy blow to the enemies of England. . . .

You will be pleased to hear that I had the pleasure of treating three friends on the day of the Jubilee to three of the best places in London for a view of the ceremony—a first-floor window at Chatto's, which is a corner house in Piccadilly, from whence everything could be seen. Mr.

Herbert Mason kindly took charge of his uncle and aunt for the day—and I need not say, favoured me afterwards with copious accounts of the spectacle—which really seems to have been very grand and beautiful, though I am sure I could never have sat it out.

[The following letter written in the last May of his life, shows that the love of children remained as strong as ever to the last.]

*To his youngest (then the only remaining)
Sister*

The Pines,
May 1st, 1908.

What a heavenly first of May! I never remember anything lovelier. If the weather goes on like this, it will make amends for the foulest March and the beastliest April I can recollect. . . . I cannot thank you enough for your very great kindness in complying with my request, or rather petition to let me know if I could help you again to be of service to little ——. It is only through you that I ever get the pleasure of doing such a thing—and I so often feel as well as think that I ought as well as that I want to. . . .

I am at present on terms of intimate friendship

with a (really and truly) most lovely lady who is not as yet "well stricken in" months—far from it—quite otherwise—but who really seems as glad to see me when we meet as I am to see her. Talk, in the vulgar sense of grown-up people or older children, we do not—for the very best of all possible reasons—but we converse by smiles and kisses in a far better and sweeter way. I long for [his mother] to see her—but nothing brings [her] so vividly back to me as the sight and the touch of the little things whom I am sure she loved so that she bequeathed her love of them—perhaps rather intensified or exaggerated—to her possibly irrational first-born.

I look forward hopefully to three weeks hence, when you give me the hope that we may see each other again.

[The following letters are quoted, somewhat at random, as relating to various of his works at their early stages.]

To his eldest Sister

3, Gt. Jas. St.,

Dec. 5th ['74].

. . . I have made you a copy of my little song for Anne Page. I must say without mock

modesty that I have been amazed at the praise it has received. I made it in bed the day before yesterday, and scribbled it down as soon as I was dressed—and thought it might just do *for music*. But everybody I have shown it to has gone into ecstasies over it—old and young. I am going to luncheon with dear old Mrs. Procter to-morrow, and I mean to see what she thinks of it. If you and ——— think it rubbish, I shall neither be surprised nor offended; for it is not what I meant to write. When I get down to Holmwood I shall bring a book of songs of Shakespeare's time written to the music of English musicians—Dowland, Morley, etc.—of the day—some of which are *too* lovely, both as poetry and as melody. Perhaps as the words were written for the notes (now, at all events, the distinction of ranks is better understood—Mr. Arthur Sullivan applies to me—"Will I give him *any* verses and he will make music to them?" *then* the poet was commissioned to write verses to suit the musicians' notes—*par exemple*!) Edward will be able to re-set them. I believe the original music exists somewhere—but it has never been reproduced, and heaven knows where it is now.

Shakespeare and *I* (if all goes well) appear together on the 19th, so I must be in town till then.

SONG.

1.

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rosy bed,
And his eyes with tears were red
And pale his lips as the dead.

2.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn.
Till the night was over worn
And the world was merry with morn.

3.

And joy came up with the day,
And kissed love's lips as he lay ;
And the watchers ghostly and grey
Fled from his pillow away.

4.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,
And his lips waxed ruddy as light.
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight.

(This is to be sung at the opening of the 4th scene of the 3rd act of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*—the manager thought of making poor Anne Page sing something to Slender !!! but I couldn't stand that. I said the only possible place in the play for a song was *here*—and they had cut out this part, as being sentimental and not comically sensational ! Then he said if I would write the song he would make them act the scene ! So I have been of some little service to sentiment.)

To his Mother

New Year's Day,
1887.

. . . I have begun a new dramatic attempt—in rhyme—founded on the legendary history of ancient Britain. The hero is the son of our first monarch, King Brute—a name that always delighted me, but I am afraid it must be “Brutus” in serious verse. His son (as all students of history will of course remember) was Locrine—who came to grief through imprudently marrying two wives, and whose young daughter Sabrina became (and is now) the goddess of the river Severn (so called after her) in which she was drowned. . . . I mean to write it in all manner of rhymed metres, which I hope and expect will reduce all other critics to the verge of raving madness. People are made so delightfully irritable by any innovation in any form of art !

To the same

Etretât,
Sep. 14 [1894].

I am here safe and so well and fresh, thanks to the mere sight and smell of sea. *Such* a lovely passage on Saturday—hard due east wind, alternate roll sideways, and plunge forward and

splashing—that I was wild with pleasure and others with sickness—I had left that behind on shore. I *must* hail the Flying Dutchman and get taken on board in some capacity—then, never stopping or landing, I shall always be well and happy. To get here is an awful labour—endless changes of line (with excessive confusion, stupidity, insolence)—and at last no beds anywhere and two hours' drive by starlight and one antediluvian gig-lamp only—no hotel open—an hour's helpless and hopeless shivering—at last an improvised bed (at 2 a.m. our hotel was roused)—but to-day all right. Powell has got the sweetest little old farmhouse fitted up inside with music, books, drawings, etc.—and of course *pokes* me into *the* nicest room. Do tell M. the place belonged last to the late M. René Favarger. . . . There is a wild little garden all uphill, and avenues of trees about. The sea is splendid, and the cliffs very like the Isle of Wight—two arches of rock each side of the bay, and *one* Needle only, exactly like *half* the Freshwater pair. We are going to Rouen soon to see the Cathedral—a cousin of P.'s lives there (*not* in the cathedral!). I must stop and save postage in time, so with best love and “the best of lucks to all” . . .

To the same

Vichy,
Aug. 22nd.

As you liked the last flowers I sent you, I send some more on the eve of leaving this place. On Tuesday 24th we start for a fresh tour in Auvergne, having prosperously completed our time and our "water-cure"; our aim being the old town of Le Puy, said to be the most curious in France.

On Friday we went to the old château of Bussy-Bourbon, badly restored outside with sham patchwork of machicolations which are as palpably false as a bad wig, but inside a splendid sample of sombre luxury, with admirable corridors, panelled chambers, carvings, windows, chapels, and so on; intricate and sumptuous as a labyrinth built up into a palace, still inhabited by its old family; seated on a high hill-top, overlooking the plains to the mountain-range. Descending, we returned by a series of gorges and winding valleys full of the various beauty of rock and moor and wood and water. Imagine, for the *sort* of scenery, the landslip with the Lewisburn and its banks put into it and magnified twentyfold in size, closed in by mountain slopes

and cliffs clothed from top to foot with deep and thick forest, and winding through many miles of road in and out of some new loveliness at every turn. The valley is called the Ardoisière, from its slate rocks, which are hidden in trees and veiled with flowers, the burn the Sichon ; it has exactly the little waterfalls, pools, rocks, breaks, and rapids of a Northumbrian burn. I got you some more flowers from a specially beautiful part of the bank, between the wood and the high moor with slopes of broken slate rock. Others that I send come from the moor of Malavon, where we went to-day. The gorge leading up to it is a lesser Ardoisière ; on the narrow summit, a long rough ridge of rock, there was once a monastery of the Templars, and the legends are still fresh how the monk-knights inveigled young peasant girls of the wild neighbourhood, murdered and flung them into oubliettes and filled their cemetery (still marked by a cross) with the corpses. The deserted walls were only razed at the Revolution ; there are still fragments left erect. At the top of the long ridge are two wells or springs, the Devil's and the Blessed Virgin's ; "*jamais l'eau n'a manquée,*" says a board set up by *hers*, but it is dirty puddle water. *His* is of course said to be bottomless, and of course when you throw in a stone you hear it strike in a few

seconds. I never saw so rocky a moor so rich in flowers. The burn and its wooded cliffs here too are splendid.

On Friday I strained or jarred my right foot in jumping from rock to rock of the Sichen at its little falls, so that yesterday I was quite disabled and had to lay it up; to-day it is but all quite well, and managed the Malavon scramble up and down without pain or difficulty. . . . To-day and yesterday, Burton says, have been exactly like Brazilian summer weather. . . .

I *fear* this will make you reconsider and repent your kind and gratifying view of my tribute to my good old friend! Of course I agree with what you say about Dickens, and you *must* know how much store I set by your opinion—not at all only out of affection. Don't you know that Walter, who is certainly one of the ablest people I ever met, says that you are one of the ablest he ever met? (I use the word "people" as equivalent to "women or men," and the word "able," as equivalent to "intellectually gifted"—which sounds American). Still, I really *love* Dickens, and shall always regard his faults as mere spots on the sun.

To his eldest Sister

The Pines,
Feb. 17, 1888.

I am in the thick of a very serious (I was going to say an immense) undertaking in which I ought to have A——'s * sympathies, as it is in honour and service of the great Royalist and Conservative poet, Ben Jonson. I am trying to give something like a decently fair and adequate account of his works, which has never yet (in my opinion) been done, even by his greatest admirers. And one item of the task is to give some notice of no less than *thirty-six* pageants at court, got up for the pleasure of Kings James and Charles I. and their queens. Which wearying it is, rather, but also interesting both from the historical and the literary point of view; and there is a deal of beautiful verse and prose, and wonderful invention and fun, in the said masques or pageants, which must have been very splendid and delightful to see. And how the old poet laureate did understand and detest and abhor the Puritans! Happily he died before the triumph of that accursed sect.

* His youngest sister.

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,
Sept. 13, '88.

I am rather addled with much hard work on Ben Jonson's prose book called "Discoveries" (in more modern English the title would be "Observations" or perhaps "Reflections")—a little book full of genius, wit and wisdom as well as (I lament to add) High Tory principles and strong Royalist doctrines—tempered, however, with so much sound sense and just feeling that if his generous and unfortunate patron King Charles I. had laid some of its remarks to heart and governed his conduct accordingly instead of listening to less wise and certainly not more loyal counsels, I think it very likely he might have died in his bed of old age, having kept his crown on to the last as well as his head.

To the same

The Pines,
Sept. 21, '88.

I had to sit up all night—or very nearly—finishing an article on Ben Jonson's "Discoveries" (his finest work in undramatic prose, and one which I think would—and must—interest

you to read ; it is so full of wit, good sense, and wise observation—let alone the politics, which are more in your line than mine) ; and then I had to correct a hurried proof, swarming with misprints and mis-pointings (which are worse) ; and it had to be sent off the first thing in the (Saturday) morning by an express messenger to the City. . . . The reason, if you care to hear of it, for this great haste, was, that the acting editor of the *Fortnightly*—the Revd. J. Verschoyle (whom we know and like much) wanted to have this long article of mine in the October number, and I was very glad to clear it off and complete my studies on the Poet Laureate of James I. and Charles I. He wrote so much, and put so much hard work into everything he undertook, that I really shrank—year after year—from the task of giving a complete critical account of his work ; but it is done at last, and I venture to think it as thorough and conscientious a piece of work as any even of his. . . .

I have had a most interesting visit this afternoon from a grandson of Landor's—a very fine young fellow and very nice—who is going off to Japan by way of America, and hopes to call again when he comes back. I found he had a very proper devotion to the memory of his illustrious grandfather, and was much interested

in seeing some of his rarest editions—books and pamphlets (two dated 1795) which I had the pleasure of showing him.

To his Mother

The Pines,
Dec. 22nd, 1880.

There came a most lovely baby in arms here on a visit one day, and it beamed on me the minute our eyes met. But of all children out of arms Bertie is much the sweetest going at any price. One thing that I heard a day or two since really brings tears into my eyes whenever I think of it. . . . He had heard an account of a crocodile hunt in which the she-crocodile was killed and her young ones left helpless and stranded—and on being found afterwards crying quietly, he said “he was so sorry for the poor little crocodiles.” His uncle couldn’t help laughing when he heard of it, though he admitted it was very touching—and I can’t help crying though I admit it was very funny. Think of the dear little innocent thing—and (as Watts says) the manliest little fellow of his age he ever knew—in tears over the crocodile orphans! I don’t know how to say what I feel about children—it is as if something of worship was mixed with love of them and delight in them. . . .



MISS ISABEL SWINBURNE.

To the same

The Pines,
Christmas Day, 1880.

. . . I send you an extract from a letter dated Oct. 18th, 1753, which may amuse you all as it did me. The writer was travelling south from York :

“My journey was not so bad as usual in a stage-coach. There was a Lady Swinburne, a Roman-Catholick, not young, that had been much abroad, seen a great deal, knew a great many people, very chatty and communicative, so that I passed my time very well ; and on the third day left them at Stilton, and got to Cambridge that night.” The writer was Mr. Thomas Gray, “of Pembroke-Hall in the University of Cambridge,” and author of *the* Elegy.

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,
Aug. 22, '6.

. . . I was glad after what you had told me of her sad state, to see that our dear old friend of very early days, Miss Eliz. Sewell, had—to use the best and most beautiful phrase ever found for our common passage out of life—“entered into rest.”

To the same

The Pines,
Oct. 12, '6.

I am sure you will be as much interested as I am in the portrait of Miss Brontë by the original of M. Paul Emanuel—whom I believe you love as much as I do. I don't think her—do you?—so very plain—so ugly—as she thought herself. The mouth is rather unshapely—but not so bad as to make everybody turn away. The poor noble creature must have been wrong and a bit morbid when she said “she noticed that nobody in a drawing-room who had caught sight of her ever looked that way again.”

To his Mother

The Pines,
March 23rd, 1890.

I did not send you my thanks at once for your most kind and precious letter of more than a week since, as perhaps I ought to have done, because I was bent on being able to tell you in my answer that your poem was ready for the press. I finished it last night, and as you are so kind to the earlier part I do venture to think you will like the close. . . . I am most grateful to you for accepting my dedication in such more than kind terms. . . .

To the same

The Pines,
March 31st, 1896.

Your poem, Walter thinks, may be out in six or seven weeks—I had hoped to say, in a month, but Easter holidays interfere with printer's work. He kindly took it himself to Chatto's and gave my orders as to the type and arrangement of the stanzas on each page. I want it to look nice and be nice for your eyes—in good large print, so as to make a pretty book.

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,
Nov. 25, '2.

I am only concerned at present with the pedigree and connections of the papal family of Borgia. I have got two beautifully illustrated big books on the subject of that remarkable house. . . . There is an engraved portrait of him [Cæsar Borgia] in the latest Borgia book I have got which is simply magnificent; not only proving that he must have been really as well as traditionally the handsomest and most splendid looking man of his time, but bringing one face to face with the great statesman and warrior whom his soldiers would have followed to the death through good and evil fortune. No doubt

he had his faults; fratricide is undeniably a fault; but I really think he was a better man, and I know he is to me a more interesting figure in history than the great Napoleon. . . .

I am writing a short memoir of Shelley and reviews of his works for Chambers's "Encyclopædia" to which Walter is a contributor. He proposed it to me in this way—that I should review the works and somebody else should sum up the story of the too short life; but I thought I would do both together, as the one explains or at least elucidates the other. I must say it is too funny—not to say uncanny—how much there is in common between us two: born in exactly the same [class], sent to Eton at exactly the same age, cast out of Oxford—the only difference being that I was not formally but informally expelled, and holding and preaching the same general views in the poems which made us famous. And yet nobody has ever pretended to think me an imitator or follower of my elder-born. . . .

To the same

The Pines,
June 26, '3.

. . . This day week I saw a sight that I would have given anything I could give to have had

you both with me once more to see. Only as it was pouring with rain in sheets I fear you might not have enjoyed it as much as I did. But what was my enjoyment to that of the happy and lovely birds I stood still in the drenching rain to watch? The whole length of the lake was covered with flocks of swallows flying along and across, dipping and rising, hovering and loitering in air so as to lose nothing of the delicious pleasure of the shower-bath. I never knew they were so fond of being bathed in water pouring straight down from heaven. Their flight to and fro and up and down was indeed "silent music." Nor did I ever see a tenth part, I think, of so many swallows together. One flew close up to me and looked into my eyes with a bright friendly glance (I ventured to think) as who should say "Isn't it lovely weather?" . . .

To the same

The Pines,
Mar. 23, 1908.

I am, or rather, I ought to be very busy on part of the book which will be my chief work in prose—"The Age of Shakespeare." This means of course a careful study of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors in the art of

dramatic poetry—from two years after the rout of the Armada to the dawn of the great civil war—just about (if not exactly) half a century. Most of it is finished and in print, but I am not quite half-way through the fifty plays of the two fellow-poets whom the churchmen and cavaliers of Charles I.'s time so naturally preferred to Shakespeare—Beaumont and Fletcher.

[The excerpts from letters which follow are of a private nature ; but I allow myself to quote them on account of their extreme beauty of sentiment and expression, and their entire refutation of the idea that there had ever been the slightest alienation of affection between him and the mother whom he adored, with unshaken loyalty, from childhood to old age.]

To his Mother

The Pines,
Sept. 21st, 1892.

It is so beautiful and delightful to think of “being together when this life is over,” as you say, and of seeing things no longer “in a glass darkly,” but all who have ever tried to do a little bit of what they thought right being brought together—if what they thought right was not

absolutely wicked and shocking, like the beliefs of persecutors—and understanding and loving each other, that I sometimes feel as if it ought hardly to be talked about. The most wonderfully and divinely unselfish man I ever knew, Mazzini, whose whole life was self-sacrifice, was so intensely possessed by this faith that if he could have been uncharitable it would have been towards the disbelievers and preachers of disbelief in it. . . .

To the same (after an illness)

The Pines,

June 21st, 1893.

How am I to thank you enough for your precious letter? You know what a relief and delight it is to see your beautiful handwriting again, in pencil as legible as ink. I trust you will soon have a nice country place to go to and recruit in, but first you will let me come and see you. I don't believe even this terribly long illness can really have altered you one bit. Ill or well, at all ages, you always had and always will have the loveliest and sweetest face possible and appropriate to whatever was or will be its time of life.

To the same

Sep. 7, 1891.

I was so glad to be at home—it is always home where you are—in those first days of sorrow, and to know that you were glad to have me.

To the same

Sep. 18, '92.

It felt very sad and odd to me at first (really rather like a first day at school) to go to bed without the thought that I should see you in the morning to look forward to. But I must be thankful for so good a time as I have had and shall always be happy when I think of. The garden and the moorside and the mere will always have the pleasantest of associations for me—and, above all, that beautiful last drive through the wood to your favourite point of view.

To the same (on a butterfly New Year's Card)

1894.

Perhaps you know that the same Greek word means “butterfly” and “soul”; or rather the Greek word for “soul” is “butterfly” (or vice versa, for “butterfly” is “soul”). It is certainly

the most beautiful and appropriate image or type of resurrection and immortality that ever was or can be thought of—and therefore very seasonable as an allegory of the new year rising from the grave of the old one.

To the same

Ap. 30, 1893.

. . . A corner in the neighbouring woods or copses where I had discovered the loveliest group or natural arrangement of white and pink or red hawthorns I ever saw anywhere ; and just as we got there the sun amiably came out (to please me, who am one of his old-world worshippers—do you know that grand last saying of the dying Mirabeau as he looked at the sunrise he had just lived to see—“ Si ce n'est pas là Dieu, c'est au moins son image ” ?)—and transfigured and glorified everything.

To his eldest Sister

27 Ja., '91.

I am very glad that dear old Irvine [their aged gardener] had so happy an end. . . . I feel with you about the appropriateness for him of that divine old hymn with its “ gallant walks.”

To the same (after his Mother's funeral)

Dec. 4, '90.

I know no such comfort in sorrow as the sight of little children. A look or a smile from them not only *re*-assures one that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," but takes one thither and makes one a denizen of that kingdom—for a few minutes, anyhow. . . .

June 11, '97.

I often and often think of what you said to me on Dec. 1st just outside the Churchyard after the funeral—that we must be more and closer to each other now than ever.

To the same

19 Jan., '92.

I have been "on the rampage" tramping over the frozen roads and commons for ten or twelve miles at a rate of from four to five miles an hour (I am told) and enjoying myself outrageously. The beauty of frost in this neighbourhood is something beyond description. The shadows of the frozen sprays or sprigs of heather against the sun at noon on the hard bright ground were so lovely that one had to stop and stare at them ;

and you couldn't wish for a prettier sight than the shining levels of ice covered with skaters of all ages and sizes.

.

5 Jan., '94.

The whin bushes are miracles of beauty—all swans' down and diamonds and the ground almost too splendid to look at—miles on unbroken miles of starry jewellery or flower-like tufts and clusters of snow.

To his Mother

The Pines,
June 4th, 1895.

I must apologize for being so late in thanking you for your lovely letter of May 21st. I am shocked when I compare the dates. . . . I hope that even in these bad times you will find a nice place with gardens and fields sufficient. Of course removing must be costly as well as troublesome, but to get settled for good in a nice bit of country would surely be worth anything. I should prefer such a retreat as the Shag Rock . . . but possibly it might not quite do for a family establishment.

I am glad you had a visit from Mrs. Boyle and Lady Tennyson, and hope it did not over-tire you.

Perhaps you may care to hear that I am making out a scheme for a narrative poem of King Arthur's time, founded on a beautiful tragic legend about two brothers—Knights of Northumberland. I have not finished my sketch of the story yet, but Walter likes the opening stanzas—inspired by the (late) hawthorns about here which are *too* lovely while they last (the flowers are all over now, of course)—that I am much encouraged to get on with it.

To the same

The Pines,
June 16th, 1895.

I am not quite sure but much afraid that I have not yet thanked you for your letter of the 5th. When one has other writing on hand one is apt, unless one answers a letter at once, to think it has been answered when very possibly it hasn't. . . . I wish you could come and see and smell the haymaking in Wimbledon Park, it is always so pretty. . . . The Yorkshire moors sound very fascinating, but to be again under your roof anywhere would always of course be for me the greatest of all pleasures and privileges. I long to

hear of you settled down to your "villeggiatura" (Do you remember our Goldoni readings when I was a little chap? *You* got me the modern languages prize at Eton, you know.) . . . Dear good William Rossetti has just sent me the table-cover, which is really a very beautiful thing—much too big for my table—indeed it covers my sofa, which is not a small one. I need not say how much I value a relic of his sister, especially one that was originally his gift to her. . . . It may perhaps gratify you—as it made me very glad to read—what the *Saturday Review* says in its notice of a book on "Lion Hunting in Somaliland." "The pig-sticking adventures are less interesting, though the hand-to-hand fight with a great boar, when Captain Melliss had had to go on foot into the thick jungle, recalls Mr. Swinburne's fine description in *Atalanta* of the slaying of the Calydonian boar, and it is interesting to observe how the plain record of the sportsman literally corroborates the vivid picture of the poet's imagination."

To the same

July 19th, 1882.

I have to thank you, as I would and should have done, but for interruptions, by return of

post, for giving me by far the greatest pleasure that anything connected with any work of mine can give me. I know you cannot need to be assured how infinitely more to me than the applause of all the reviews on earth is a word of praise from you—above all, on the subject of my poems on little children. . . . As I said to Watts, What would three columns of large type in the *Times* be compared with three lines from your hand? But I cannot and will not try to tell you the delight you have given me. . . .

. . . My movements must in some degree depend upon yours, as I could not dream of letting you go gadding and gallivanting to foreign shores without our meeting to say goodbye and “*a rivederci*” (the prettiest and most sensible of all forms of parting). I said it to the Burtons (who are leaving England once more) last week, when we dined with them at our old friend Dr. Bird’s. Old Mr. Horne (the poet, Australian magistrate, dramatist, and among other things correspondent—as I may remember—of Mrs. Browning) was of the party—as wonderful a young man of 85 as Mrs. Procter is, at the same age, a wonderful young woman. He has sent me sundry photographs of children in sign of sympathy with my poems on the subject. . . .

I hope this tardy note may reach you,
but I fear it may not, before you start for
Bonchurch. I trust the change will
do you good, & that when you return you
will be well enough & good enough to call
on me.

Alwin Burne

To the same

The Pines,
Easter Day, April 5th, 1885.

. . . Your letters *did* come last evening—just at dinner time. I did not answer them the same night because I had a fancy that I should like the first words I wrote in this new year of my life to be addressed to you. . . .

. . . What stuff people talk about youth being the happiest time of life! Thank God . . . I am very much more than twice as happy now as I was when half my present age just twenty-four years ago.

It *would* be nice if you could come down here some warm spring day and take a short quiet drive along my favourite road with me, which I have so long wanted you to see in its beauty—the moor miscalled a common, the quaint old town (and especially one long lovely bit of old weather-stained many-coloured wall, which we all delight in) and the beautiful lawns, meadows, avenues, and copses of Wimbledon Park. All this you might see in an hour's gentle drive. I have taken the walk before breakfast more than once.

To the same

The Pines,
June 16th, 1886.

I have been walking this afternoon over the roads we drove over yesterday, following exactly the trace of the carriage (except that in going out to Wimbledon I took the heath or the open down instead of the high road skirting it) and going over in my mind every minute and every incident of the drive which I shall always remember, I am sure, as one of the most thoroughly delightful things I have to remember in all the days of my life. It was quite perfect as a realization of all my dreams; and every inch of the way to-day, every turn and every tree and every change of prospect, was more enjoyable to me than even it ever was before. . . .

To the same

The Pines,
Sept. 21st, 1890.

I am unhappy to think of your having suffered so much as I fear you must have done since I last saw you. But I cannot think you will ever look "very much altered" to me. I may say now how I have been longing to see you again and

thinking of the happy time I had under your (temporary) roof last year. Every morning my first thought was of delight that I was going to see you, and every night my last and strongest was one of thankfulness that I had had another day of you. . . .

To his eldest Sister

Dec. 27, '95.

If only poor Coleridge could—if only poor Rossetti could—have taken the same wholesome and happy and grateful delight in Nature as Wordsworth and Tennyson did and as Walter and I do, they would have been so much happier—and (I hope and think) such much better men.

To his youngest Sister

The Pines,
June 21, '5.

Very many thanks for my returned proofs. I am very really happy to hear that you read my little old story with interest, but rather sorry you "wish it hadn't been letters." Do you know that *all* the novels approved and admired by Dr. Johnson were cast in that form? Of course, as I said

to M——* in a letter written after I received your note, it wants more attention than a flowing narrative, and bores the reader of our days unless he cares to think while reading—a little ; but I have just got a letter by return of post saying she doesn't think it at all a bad way of telling a story. But I know Walter is right in saying that the public will agree with you and the book won't sell half as well as if it had been written in the third person. M. has not seen anything of it : you are the only person whom I have sent or should think of sending the proofs to.

You will, I know, be pleased to hear that your liking of the little bit of description of “ the different homes ” was anticipated more than forty years ago (the letters are dated just about the time I wrote them or perhaps a year earlier) by our dear Ned Jones ; who was as cordial and delightful in his enjoyment (rather than criticism) of the whole book. I should never be surprised to find you and him agreeing on any point.

To his Mother

The Pines,
June 8th [no year given].

I need not say how glad I was to get your letter the day before yesterday . . . besides the message

* The editor.

from dear old Uncle Percy* who was so kind a host to me in past years. I suppose it implies that he would be pleased rather than bored or put out by receiving the copy of my last new book which I shall tell Chatto to send him. I am very sincerely and deeply gratified by what he says of my Shakespeare book. It is a great pleasure to me always that anything I do should find favour in the sight of old people (*let alone* one's nearest relations), and I have had great good luck (I think) generally in that line and especially of late—beginning with Hugo himself, and going on with Trelawny, Halliwell-Phillipps and Collier—the Patriarch of the whole tribe. Add up their four several ages, and it would be going on for four hundred years—the time of the Wars of the Roses. Think of corresponding with four men whose lives united would reach back to the days of York and Lancaster (or nearly as far!).

Talking of old age naturally reminds me of the venerable Bertie, who in spite of the certainly capricious weather continues to enjoy his usual health and spirits. His aunt, I am sorry to say, left us yesterday, having stayed just long enough to hear the end of a new poem which I finished the day before in honour of dear old Landor—another friend of ninety years upward. It is

* The Honble. Percy Ashburnham.

800 lines long—280 longer than that on Hugo. I fear the length will frighten you, but Watts deliberately pronounces it the finest thing I ever wrote. I am very glad if it is, for I hold his memory in the most sincere affection and reverence, and can very honestly declare that I would sincerely prefer to any success or profit or notoriety the knowledge that I had done something to spread his fame or serve his memory or help to widen the circle of his admirers and students or to hasten the inevitable but too long delaying date when all Englishmen will agree in ranking his name among those of our noblest countrymen and greatest writers.

[The following extracts are of a political nature, and are given as specimens of his views and feelings on the questions of the day.]

To his Mother

The Pines,
Dec. 8th, 1882.

. . . I was very glad to have news of you all and to be assured, as I knew I should be, of your kind sympathy both in my enjoyment of the honour done me and the kindness shown me in Paris, and also in the one serious drawback to that

enjoyment. After all it is only on rare occasions that I really feel the want of ears, going out so very seldom as I do—and I am unspeakably thankful that my eyes, which I should feel the want of more than most people, are so good and strong.

I am grieved at two pieces of news in the papers—the trouble which has overtaken poor good Mrs. Joynes, who was so infinitely kind to me, at the age when I most needed kindness—and the death of M. Louis Blanc, one of the very best, bravest, gentlest and most unselfish men in the world. Even the *Times* cannot pretend or venture to question that. I shall always remember with pleasure the one evening I spent in his company, when I had the honour of converting that eminent Republican and Socialist leader to Jacobitism (which I always boast of) by the surely unanswerable argument that if we had succeeded in bringing back the Stuarts and driving out the Guelphs, England would now be a Republic. For we never could have been quite such servile idiots as to recall the Hanover rats—if we had once driven them out—and we certainly should have had to get rid of the Stuarts a third time—we *could* not have stood more than 20 or 30 years more of their government—and *faute de mieux* (as royalists would say)—*faute de pis*, as I should say—we

must have proclaimed the Commonwealth of England—this time without the Puritanism and Militarism which made the ruin of Cromwell's Government inevitable as soon as the personal influence of the great usurper and dictator was removed by his death.

I hope I have not bored you by my historical argument in favour of the Jacobites—but I am proud to say that the great republican historian to whom I first explained it seemed really struck by its originality and plausibility, and admitted most courteously that I had made out a good case.

To his youngest Sister

Sep. 24/90.

I had all but forgotten what I had “made a note of” to tell you. A week or two since I received a request to let my name be added to a committee of sympathizers with that unspeakable old villain Paul Kruger and his lying thieving murdering Boers; a committee convened to protest against the wickedness of the Government which (as far as I can see) *is* very seriously to blame for not giving the rascals far shorter shrift—by the despatch of an ultimatum *months* ago. I think you would have approved of the note

which informed these worthies that I was about the very last man in England to allow my name to be associated with theirs.

To his Mother

The Pines,
Ap. 9th, 1883.

I send you the number of *Rappel* containing my letter on the "Irish Question" which you said you should like to see. Of course I did not ask the editor to suppress either my signature or the mention of ——'s name as the encourager of tortures and murderers of women; it was my friend Auguste Vacquerie's own consideration and forethought which induced him to do so—greatly to Watts's relief and satisfaction—rather than expose me to the chance of such reprisals as are usually practised or attempted by those noble and heroic patriots who have made the very name of Irishman as loathsome in the American republic as in the English kingdom. If I can find the numbers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* containing the very curious and interesting history of the extermination of a league of Irish murderers by the united action of private citizens in America, I will send them to you. I think you will—as Watts does—agree with me that there is some danger of

these wretches being the means of introducing into England the spirit of Lynch law—which is perhaps better than none at all : and that if the English people is once thoroughly roused by excess of provocation, there will and must be a risk of blind and unjust retaliation—of which there has been more than enough on both sides in the past. In reading my letter, you will understand that the *Rappel* had been quoting the tyranny of former English rulers, and especially of Cromwell, as an explanation of the existing spirit of Ireland towards England ; and though of course not a justification, a palliation of Irish political crime. This, I need not tell you, is the favourite plea of Irish orators and writers ; and I thought it would be a good and useful work to point out that it is about as just and reasonable as it would be to suggest that the horrible atrocities exercised by French kings on whole provinces of France in the name of the Church and the Monarchy should be laid to the charge of the existing French government. Bad and cruel and stupid as the English—under considerable provocation, it must be admitted—have sometimes, and too often, been in their rule of Ireland, there is nothing even in that unpleasant part of our history comparable to the horrors of the “ dragonnades ” which Louis XIV. inflicted on his subjects to please the Church, his mistress,

and that sainted prelate Bossuet: but nobody suggests that the South of France should rise in rebellion against any form of government in consequence of what happened two hundred years ago. And yet, if the argument is worth anything in the one case, it must be worth as much or more in the other.

To the same

The Pines,
May 16, 1886.*

I really cannot tell you—I should have to use very demonstrative language if I tried—how much pleasure your approbation of my late political work gives me. Of course it was a great interruption to other things; but I really thought it was every loyal Englishman's duty to do what he could at such a time against such traitors, such cowards, such time-servers and such idiots, as infest the ways of politics just now. It was something, certainly, for one man—quite outside the active or political or social world—to get a hearing for what he had to say, and an opening for the attack he had to make, in three leading papers at once. And I may say, from what I hear, that the

* I am inclined to think this is a wrong date. The poem and other incidents mentioned in the letter belong to 1887.

attack has not fallen flat. But my old and dear friend Blind's letter was of course the great proof to me that all my friends for whose opinions I cared a brass farthing were and must be with me. People nowadays seem to forget . . . that the first principle of a Republican is and must be Unity (without which liberty can only mean licence—or pure anarchy—or pretentious hypocrisy) and that Republicans ought in common consistency and honesty to be the first to protest against a party of anarchists and intriguers whose policy is to break up the state. . . . And now I send you—as in duty (and pleasure) bound, the first copy printed of my * ode—that is, one of the two first copies—the other going back to the printer's. So you will be the first to read it outside this household (except of course the magazine people); and I hope you will like it. I got up two mornings running at five o'clock to work on it, so as to get it finished in good time. Watts was much taken with the 26th † stanza in particular, about the recent triumphs of science: I

* "The Commonweal."

† XXVI.

The forces of the dark dissolve,
 The doorways of the dark are broken;
 The word that casts out night is spoken,
 And whence the springs of things evolve,
 Light, born of night, bears token.

want you to like the 36th * and I doubt not you will approve of the compliments paid to the present Unionist government, and the allusion to its precious predecessor, in the 40th and the five following. But I will say I never wrote anything that I thought better of than I do of the last seven stanzas.

[The four extracts which finish the collection are from letters addressed to myself. There is more difficulty in making a selection from these on account of the jokes and fictitious matter which bulk largely in our correspondence of many years.—EDITOR.]

The Pines,
Sep. 11, '99.

Here is your promised proof. I shall be glad if you like the play as well or half as well as [Watts] does. He *is* satisfactory! He borrowed this proof to go thro' it for the second time and is if anything more cordial and enthusiastic than when I read it out to him. . . . I have followed the

* XXXVI.

Thy quickening woods rejoice and sing
Till earth seems glorious as the sea,
With yearning love too glad for glee
The world's heart quivers towards the spring
As all our hearts toward thee.

real dates exactly—it all happened, and I wrote it all in the month of June (you will recognize my Norse abhorrence of hot weather and southern climate here and there—how could our Northmen stand it! and fight in it!)—and where I have altered the facts of history, it has been only to raise the characters to a rather higher level, and tone down what was too naïf or primitive in half-savage straightforwardness for anything but a Saga. Hildegard is entirely my invention: in the two earlier English plays on the subject the love affair of Almachildes is simply a vulgar intrigue between a fast young soldier and a girl of no character in the royal household. Rosamund, so far from dying with the husband she had immolated to the memory of her father, bolted with Almachildes across the frontier into Pannonia, where in due time they were slain, if I rightly remember, by Lombard avengers of their great warrior king. I think you will agree with W. that my alterations are both poetical and moral improvements on the real story.

Oct. 11, '99.

I am truly grateful to you for telling me just what you think about the subject of my new play. It is certainly a queer as well as a grim story, and

it is very good of you to say what is very gratifying to me, that "no one could have told it as I have done, with such delicate touches," but the skull-cup and the wife's desperate revenge always fascinated me when I was quite a little fellow and read "Rosmunda" with my mother.

[These are some remarks upon the MS. translation of a modern Icelandic play, which I had lent him to look at.]

[1899.]

I have now read "The Cavemen" carefully through, which was much pleasanter to do in your beautiful handwriting than in "type-writing," which is my abhorrence. I couldn't try to read anything type-written. It is a very curious and interesting work. The fault in it seems to me the want of centralized interest—the diffusion of shifting interests among so many changing characters that it is impossible, even if you remember who is who, to bring your attention to bear and keep it fixed on any definite or definable point. When I read the 14th page I *did* sympathize with Valnastakk (or shall we say, Coat-o'-mail?) in his delight and sympathy with a swirling spate. There is nothing on land so lovely and exciting and "sympathique" to look upon—except the

finest waterfalls. Once when I was quite a little boy—years before Eton, I think—my father came into my bedroom at Mounces (I wish you had ever been with us there), took me out of bed, wrapped (or happit) me in a blanket and carried me through the garden, across the road, through the copse and down the bank to see the place where I had bathed that morning before breakfast, in a clear pool at the foot of a waterfall—and where there was now neither waterfall nor pool, but one unbroken yellow torrent roaring like continuous thunder. Perhaps I didn't enjoy and don't (as you see) remember it ! . . .

How beautiful are the words of the dying man at page 53. I might say much more if I had time, but will only congratulate you on the achievement of a rather considerable task. If you *will* know, I think the killing of a wretched old carline rather horrid—I have a certain reverence for age and sex, however unpleasant any particular crone may make herself. . . . [He ends this letter by saying] I have just room and time to add a word of thanks to B—(the “Baby Kinswoman” of his exquisite poem) for her delicious primroses. They are under my eyes and nose as I write. . . .

(He never forgot to acknowledge little gifts, and more especially appreciated those of a child.)

(Here is a characteristic description of a storm.)

I say, have you heard or read about the great and glorious thunderstorm of last Tuesday? I had the jolly good luck to be caught in it—on an open common or moorland. I don't know if you're like me in that, but the sight of lightning and the sound of thunder do and always did intoxicate me—a harmless and wholesome intoxication, but I know no other word for it. I bet I've told you how my tutor caught me once two-thirds out of window on the top story and jerked me down violently by one leg when I was bathing in storm. "*What on earth* are you doing?" "Oh, sir, *isn't* it *nice*?" (I felt that "jolly" was too commonplace a word for anything so superlatively jolly.) "NICE!" said Mr. Joynes, in large capitals, "It's *awful*" . . . You should have seen how lovely the lightning was—and heard the thunder reminding "poor Mr. Handel" that even he can only imitate its *really* heavenly music. Once there came, or seemed to come down just straight in front of my face such a wonderful momentary flower of pure white fire, complete in its calyx and its petals *literally* radiating from the lovely centre, that one felt it was almost too heavenly for a dweller on earth to see. And the rain was a real bath. I was a drenched rag when I got home—

soaked through from head to foot—but it did me no end of good. I wish I could command storm at will, like a witch. But perhaps it might be rough on other people.

(This gives a little more about the “ Etretât ” episode.)

. . . Sport is all very well and wholesome by way of training, but such a death * is no more desirable than mine would have been when I was swept out to sea for over two miles and picked up at the last gasp by a French fishing boat . . . in the 'sixties. It was a jolly good lark, and the fellows who had saved my life couldn't make enough of me. The friend I was staying with at “ Etretât ” (another old Etonian—dead now, poor dear fellow) when I came back again as his guest next year, and was rather astounded at finding myself rushed at, seized by arms and legs, hoisted and cheered, and carried all down the street with shouts of welcome, by the fisher folk and sailors who knew me again at once, said to me after I was let down in rather a dishevelled state of mind and body, “ Why, don't you know you're their hero ? ” and I said, “ I don't see where the

* I have not the quotation at hand, but it refers to a youth killed in sport of some kind. (ED.)

hero comes in—if I'd gone in after somebody who was drowning it would have been a creditable sort of thing—but it was just an accident.” But did I ever tell you about our going out afterwards with these fellows fishing pieuvres—real live pieuvres? and the oldest grey-haired fisherman said he quite believed that there were such pieuvres as could hold a strong man down and suck him to death. . . . I put my little finger to the round cup-like tip of one of the suckers or tentacles of quite a little one, evidently dying—when I pulled it away it hurt so that I looked at the tip of my finger expecting to see it all raw and bloody—but it had not quite taken the skin off. . . .

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT.

I THINK these excerpts, though only a few of many that might be quoted, are sufficient, being spread over a large portion of the writer's life, to give a fair idea of the deeper side of his character, as well as to show how little in essentials the character altered with time. Certainly the more brilliant, if sometimes erratic, coruscations of his genius, as well as the perfervid Republicanism which became a part of his nature, were modified to some extent in later years; but the spirit and the fire were there, and there was no diminution of his intellectual and creative power, up to his last days. The time of his vivid and fiery youth was not that of his best production. It was in the little home at Putney, with its quiet household routine, varied by the visits of intimate friends, varied for him, too, by his own visits to relations, or to the friends afflicted with pain and trouble, whom it was his province to amuse and cheer—his one annual holiday by the sea—his daily walks, communing with nature and the

little children whom he loved ; it was among these surroundings that the great imperishable works of his life were brought forth. His deafness, which increased with years, made him averse from mixing in society on a large scale, but every other faculty was as keen as a youth's, and his enjoyment in his friends' company was unquestionable. Neither, as the letters plainly show, did his literary work hinder him from attending to the claims of his family. Over and over again, the New Year brings his first written words to his mother—after her death, to his eldest sister. Birthdays and family anniversaries were remembered and marked ; and he often writes with pleasure to one of the home circle describing some gift which he has in store for another member of it—some book, curio, or autograph—with an amusing and childlike insistence on keeping it a dead secret. Indeed, the children's lover had a great deal of the child always in his composition, as many of the finest characters have ; and it was among the most attractive features, to those who knew him, in a personality hard for the outward world to understand, and which will perhaps never really be fully understood.

APPENDIX

A LETTER which has been preserved, written by Charlotte Countess of Ashburnham to her daughter, mother of the poet, contains an interesting reference to Algernon's first months at Eton. She mentions a visit from a cousin who also had been to place his boy at Eton—

“and had heard from Dr. Hawtrey such a character of dear [Algernon]! his cleverness, his amiability and *goodness* in every way, in short as if the boy of highest character in the school. . . . Dr. H. was quite ignorant of the relationship.”

Some old diaries kept by Miss Julia Swinburne, aunt of the poet, also contain some entries—of the shortest, but not without interest—regarding Algernon. On the 7th April, 1837, occurs the line—“Heard from Charles that J. had a son born Ap. 5th, 5 a.m.”

In the July of the same year we read: “Chas. and Jane and their infant arrived about 9”—that being for their accustomed stay at Capheaton in Northumberland, with the grand-parents. It was thus at 3 months old that the poet was introduced to the county for which he retained through life the utmost love and admiration—the cradle of his race.

Under date of 24th April, 1849, is the entry: “At 2 Cha^s took Algⁿ to Eton, his first going there.”

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM THE REVD. FATHER
CONGREVE (OF COWLEY).

Our Tutor, Mr. Joynes, introduced Swinburne and me when we came to Eton, as boys who would have as an excuse for comradeship that we were neither of us good at the games in the fields—football, cricket, etc.—I, because of some physical infirmity, he because of his absorption in literature.

So we accidentally became friends. I have still a little book of his which he gave me, writing in it my name and his own in his large childlike handwriting—"Talfourd's Tragedies."

For our walks we generally tended to the solitude of the fields along the riverside. He used to discourse with me at large about Elizabethan Dramatic Poets, of whose plays he knew pages and pages by heart. In these solitary paths he would intone for me innumerable stately lines from them, "mouthing out his hollow o's and a's" with the fervent inspiration of poet or prophet. He could not trudge along the grassy path as I did, but rather seemed to dance along a little before me, with eyes and hands lifted up, as he gave out the great words with enthusiasm.

We met again later on at Oxford, and I remember his leaving me his first edition of Tennyson's Poems that I might copy for myself several short poems that were omitted in all subsequent editions.

ALGERNON'S PARENTS

(Page 10 of "Recollections.") "His parents were the last persons, etc." This must not be taken as implying that his parents were either unsympathetic, or unappreciative of any talent displayed by

their children. I should like to draw attention to this, because Admiral Swinburne has been sometimes spoken of as a stern disciplinarian, with no leaning to the gentler arts of poetry, painting, and music. To us who knew him the impression seems entirely wrong. A disciplinarian undoubtedly he was, as his profession and training required of him: stern he could be when necessary; but a more wise, tender and affectionate father could hardly exist. I do not think he was a great reader of poetry, but he could appreciate what was good; and Algernon, as we have seen, speaks with pride and pleasure of his father's having read the whole of his "Bothwell"—no small undertaking. Music he loved, and painting also, without practising either art himself, though he could draw and design, and was something of a mechanical genius, devoted to turning and carpentry of all kinds. Several of his sisters were accomplished artists, favourite pupils of Mulready and Turner: and an uncle—Edward Swinburne—devoted the whole of a long life to the brush; his works, though he painted only for love of the art, being worthy to rank with those of Varley and Barret and other great water-colour painters of the time.

And what shall be said of the mother, whom Algernon adored with a lifelong affection, reverence, and admiration—fervent in sympathy where they agreed, gentle, respectful, and delicately reticent where they could not see eye to eye? It seems impossible and unfair not to speak of her, in any memoir of him, in whom she inspired a devotion which nothing could shake. She was worthy of it. She possessed a character and temperament full of brilliancy and fire, with a strong serious or spiritual side to it—enthusiastic, decided, self-reliant in the best sense, and

withal a fund of humour which charmed all who were familiar with her, and which she transmitted in no mean share to all her children. The most watchful, sympathetic, and affectionate mother—save one—that I ever knew, it is not difficult to estimate the effect of her influence in moulding the character of her first-born. His own references to their old readings together—the words “you taught me that, you know”—which occur more than once among his letters, show how he valued her teaching, to the end of his life. With regard to her opinion of his work, he has repeatedly said that in respect of her praise or approbation, the criticisms of the public were as nothing in his eyes. And in all that he addressed directly to her, whether in verse or in prose, we find the same spirit of tender affection and lofty admiration.

The portrait which is here reproduced gives to my mind a far better, more truthful idea of her gracious and dignified presence than any ordinary photograph ever taken.

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